

IN THIS ISSUE



In this issue Dr Romesh Nalliah discusses the problem of patients in the US seeking dental treatment

in hospitals rather than practices and argues that dentists should be integrated into the hospital team.

Visiting a dental practice is seen as a luxury rather than a necessity among US patients and instead hospitals have to manage the burden of neglected dental disease. However, few emergency rooms have dentists and commonly dental problems are not managed efficiently: 'One of our earlier studies has shown that close to 300 people die each year in American hospitals after being admitted due to a dental complaint.' Romesh works closely with medical, pharmacy, nursing and social

worker students to provide oral health training to them: 'When all health professions send a uniform message to their patients about the importance of oral health we will be able to change the dangerous attitude that oral health is a luxury.'

US dental healthcare delivery is greatly segmented with major differences existing between states: 'In terms of dentistry, the 'Un-united States' is a more appropriate term.' A large proportion of patients are uninsured and state funded public insurance Medicaid does not always cover dentistry, unless it reaches the emergency room and is considered a medical problem.

Romesh was raised, trained and worked in Australia, but after marrying his Chicago-born wife, he moved to the US and secured a job at Harvard University. Seeing himself not only as a dentist but a health services researcher and public health advocate, the US presents an exciting challenge.

Did you know? Romesh shares a birthday with Allan Lamb and his childhood dream was to play cricket alongside him for Northamptonshire County. Romesh spent hundreds of hours in his Adelaide backyard crafting an imaginary batting partnership!

You can read *Dentists in the US should be integrated into the hospital team* on page 391.

NATIONAL SMILE MONTH

National Smile Month will take place 19 May - 19 June 2014. In 2013, around 3,000 organisations supported the campaign and reached in excess of 50 million people with a positive message to improve oral health. The British Dental Health Foundation are launching a new website for 2014. To register your interest and to receive your free Smileys, visit www.smilemonth.org.

Note on The sugar diaries (BDJ 2014; 216: 272). It has been pointed out there is no evidence that the natural sugars present in a reasonable amount of fresh fruit and vegetables in the diet is detrimental to dental health, therefore fresh fruit and vegetables should not have been included in the sugar diaries featured.

HONOURS, AWARDS, APPOINTMENTS

New Chair of PEC

Dr Mick Armstrong has been elected as the new Chair of the British Dental Association's Principal Executive Committee (PEC). Dr Armstrong is a general dental practitioner in a mostly NHS practice in Castleford, West Yorkshire and has been a member of the PEC since its inception in July 2012.

Graduate entry director

Professor Richard Ibbetson has been selected as Director of the graduate entry BDS course in the University of Central Lancashire's School of Medicine and Dentistry. Professor Ibbetson has been Professor of Restorative Dentistry at Barts and the London for the past three years and is also currently Dean of the Faculty of Dental Surgery of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh.

ROGER BETTLES RETIRES IN STYLE

Roger Bettles, BDA Past President (1995), has retired from the Council of the University of Leicester, on which he served for 15 years, the last six years as Chairman and Pro-Chancellor. The University has dedicated a new Sports Centre in his name. During Dr Bettles' time on the Council, the University of Leicester has risen from 36th to 13th in national league tables and won awards from the *Times Higher Education*. Whilst Dr Bettles disclaims personal responsibility for these achievements, he does proudly lay claim to being the only university Chair to have presided over the institution that found a king in a car park.

JURY NO LONGER OUT ON WATER FLUORIDATION

A new report published by Public Health England has confirmed that people living in fluoridated areas in the UK have lower levels of tooth decay, and children are far more likely to avoid the trauma of having diseased teeth removed under general anaesthesia, than those living in non-fluoridated areas.

The report confirms what the dental community has known for decades: that there is no evidence that water fluoridation schemes in the UK are harmful to health. It also notes that 28% fewer five-year-olds have tooth decay in fluoridated areas than non-fluoridated areas when deprivation and ethnicity – both important factors for dental health – are taken into account.

The British Dental Association (BDA) welcomed the report. Scientific adviser Professor Damien Walmsley said: 'The report is a timely reminder of the significant role that fluoridation plays in reducing tooth decay, which remains a significant problem in England. It also emphasises the important role [fluoridation] plays in alleviating the misery of dental general anaesthesia in children.'

Oral health charity the British Dental Health Foundation also welcomed the report. Public Health

England found no differences between fluoridated and non-fluoridated areas in rates of hip fracture, cancer, and Down's syndrome births.

Chief Executive of the Foundation, Dr Nigel Carter OBE, hopes that this research will finally end the debate surrounding water fluoridation: 'Although water fluoridation schemes have been in place in the UK for more than 40 years, only around 5.5 million people have been drinking water from a fluoridated area. [...] Fluoridation is the most important single measure that the UK Government can take to bring a substantial change in the nation's dental health.'

To read the full report visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fluoride-monitoring-report-finds-lower-levels-of-tooth-decay-in-fluoridated-areas-and-no-evidence-of-harm-to-health>.

