**Economic fears in the US affect dental care**

**Visiting a dentist of low priority for many people, new study says**

Daniel Zimmermann

**LEIPZIG/WASHINGTON D.C.:**

With the economy in the United States declining, preventive dental care can be one of the first things to go. The correlation between rising unemployment and a drop in preventive dental care, however, is not necessarily due to people being short of cash, according to a new study appearing in the online edition of *Health Services Research*.

The researchers analysed 10 years of information about visits to dentists' offices in metropolitan Seattle and Spokane from Washington Dental Services, the largest dental insurer in the US state, which covers roughly one-third of its residents. They compared this information to unemployment data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and Washington's Employment Security Department, and ruled out other possible explanations for a correlation.

In the Seattle area, for every 1,000 people who lost their jobs, there was a 1.2 per cent decrease in visits to dentists for checkups. The drop was higher in the Spokane area, where the same increase in unemployment was associated with a 5.95 per cent decrease in preventive visits. This is notable as the study looked at some form of parodontitis.

“We see that high community-level unemployment exacts a psychological toll on individuals,” said lead study author Brian Quinn. “Even for people who are working, or who have a working partner or spouse, there might be an impact if they’re stressed about themselves or their significant others losing their jobs.”

Quinn, a program officer for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, said the distraction of worrying about not having a job could make dental care drop off a person’s radar. “During stressful periods, those things that don’t seem as urgent may be ignored,” he said.

Quinn added that because preventive care is usually cheaper than tooth repairs, dental plan administrators and public health policy makers might want to promote cleaning and check-ups during periods of high unemployment.

**Stock markets around the world plunged in September. Photo: Ioana Drutu/Paul Fleet.**

**Miswaks level toothpaste**

**LEIPZIG:** Dentists at the King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, have found that tooth cleaning sticks or miswaks are as beneficial for oral health as toothpaste. The research identified a total of 19 substances that kill harmful microorganisms and protect gums.

**Infertility by gum disease**

**LEIPZIG:** Infertile men are more likely to suffer from chronic gum infections than those with healthy sperm. After studying 56 men who came to a fertility lab for sperm analysis, Israeli researchers found that more than 80 per cent had some form of periodontitis.

**EU bans mercury exports, not amalgam**

Anke Schiemann

**LEIPZIG:** An export ban on mercury in the European Union from 2011 will not include dental amalgam, a spokesperson of the European Commission has told Dental Tribune. The ban was announced by the commission by end of September in order to reduce health risks. The new rules will also oblige all mercury already in Europe to be “safely stored” so as not to cause a hazard.

Mercury and its compounds are highly toxic to humans and high doses can be fatal. Although the use of mercury is declining worldwide, it is still used in small-scale gold mining, the chlor-alkali industry, and production of vinyl-chloride monomer, the basis of PVC plastic. The EU ended all mercury extraction in 2001 but remains the world’s biggest exporter, supplying around a quarter of global consumption of mercury.

**Tokyo court turns down technicians lawsuit**

Sakaya Ikeda

**TOKYO:** A claim by a group of 84 dental technicians to ban overseas dentures, mostly made in China, from being imported into Japan was recently dismissed by the Tokyo District Court. The lawsuit was filed by beginning of September claiming that dental work from overseas receives no quality control in the country and might contain hazardous substances. The group has announced its appeal against the decision at the Tokyo High Court.

According to the group’s petition and other sources, a number of companies that relay dentists’ instructions to workshops in China before
The bid of the Singapore Dental Association to hold the congress in 2009 was publicly announced at the Opening Ceremony of the International Dental Exhibition and Meeting in Singapore in 2006 and it was accepted half a year later. 2009 will not be the first time for the FDI to hold its congress in the Asian tiger state. The last one was organised in 1990 and attracted a large number of delegates from all over South East Asia. In addition to the upcomming congress, the FDI is also involved in the organisation of the IDEM scientific programme. IDEM is one of the largest dental events in Singapore and the Asia Pacific region.

Singapore benefits from a strong tradition in dentistry, its dental school, the first in the Far East set up by the British Government in 1929, offers training programmes at undergraduate and post-graduate levels and is well regarded by many major international examination bodies. In addition, a significant number of dentists practising in Singapore have received post-graduate training from international institutions in the USA, UK and Australia. Singapore is also seeing more and more overseas patients, mainly because of the repatriation law which has gained for its high standard of treatment.

Reduced registration rates for the FDI congress are offered to those who either register and submit payment by the early bird deadline of 15 May 2009 or before the pre-registration deadline of 25 July 2009. After which, those who wish to attend the congress will have to register on-site in Singapore at the full-congress rates.

New health crisis in developing countries

Reuters

BANGALORE, India: A lack of skilled personnel has health systems in developing countries "on the brink of collapse," said Ezekiel Nukuoro, an Asia adviser for the World Bank, warning of an "existential crisis.

"In some countries, deaths from preventable diseases are rising, and life expectancy is dropping," he said. Some specialists claim the health crisis in such countries is being exacerbated by Western countries recruiting skilled migrant personnel, which gained initial attention in rudimentary clinics staffed by untrained nurses, is affected the most. Across the continent, workers, which gained initial attention in rudimentary clinics staffed by untrained nurses, is affected the most. Across the continent, skilled personnel has health systems of countries where child-
ren die daily from diarrhoea and where diseases like AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria run rampant.

Aid agencies have warned that a "blue card" plan in the European Union to attract highly skilled migrant doctors which gained initial attention in rudimentary clinics staffed by untrained nurses, is affected the most. Across the continent, skilled personnel has health systems of countries where children die daily from diarrhoea and where diseases like AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria run rampant.

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