Flouride rich baby food under fire from scientists

Daniel Zimmermann
DTI

NEW YORK, USA/LEIPZIG, Germany: Scientists in the US have warned of the risks of exposing young children to large amounts of fluoride. In a study published in the October edition of the Journal of the American Dental Association they claim that an increased intake of the mineral from drinking water, dentifrice, infant powder products or beverages can lead to a higher risk of developing fluorosis, a condition that discolours and weakens teeth.

The findings confirm earlier evidence indicating a link between dental fluorosis and greater intake of fluoride in early life. The latest study, conducted by researchers from the University of Iowa in the United States, found that a greater fluoride intake from reconstituted powder, a popular choice for infant food in the US, and other beverages with added water increased fluorosis risk in children between the ages of three and nine months. They suggested avoiding the ingestion of additional fluoride through consumption of these mixtures in order to reduce the prevalence of the condition nationwide.

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one-third of children between the ages of 12 to 15 years in the US suffer from some form of fluorosis. The country also has the highest occurrence of fluoridated water in the world.

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EAO votes first Brit for president

Daniel Zimmermann
DTI

LONDON, UK/LEIPZIG, Germany: Dr David A. Stone has been elected the first British President of the European Association for Osseointegration (EAO). The dentist from Perthshire in the UK, who also serves as Chairman of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh Advisory Board in Implant Dentistry, took over from Prof. Christoph Hämmerle, Switzerland, during the association’s recent congress in Glasgow in October. He will serve as president for 2011/2012.

The meeting also saw Prof. Søren Schou from Denmark installed as President-Elect. French Prof. Pascal Valentini from Paris will be taking over as new Secretary-General.

“Dentistry is still an ‘empirical discipline’, relying on evidence to provide the most appropriate way of treating patients. A very important part of the EAO’s philosophy is to bridge the gap between science and clinical practice,” Dr Stone told Dental Tribune Asia Pacific. “As president of this organisation I intend to ensure that this is further strengthened in a way that is relevant to modern practice.”

Founded in Munich in Germany in the late 1980s, the EAO aims to promote and facilitate research, clinical applications, and treatment methods based on the principles of osseointegration. The organisation’s recent congress in the UK focused on a wide range of surgical, prosthetic and planning processes in implant dentistry.

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Alaska study supports employment of dental therapists

Dental therapists can offer adequate dental health care to underserved populations, a US study has found. The two-year evaluation of a dental therapists programme in the state of Alaska supports the use of therapists to perform basic dental procedures, such as sealant placement and filling preparation, to overcome the significant shortage of dental professionals in rural areas.

Dental therapists routinely perform dentist tasks in many countries, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Sri Lanka. Montana and Alaska are the first US states to allow therapists to provide higher dental care. Therapists in Alaska have been performing basic surgical procedures under the supervision of dentists in remote native villages since 2005.

While Alaska has a sufficient number of dentists, according to US government statistics, it fails to provide adequate dental care to its widely scattered native population.

National and local dental associations in the US have criticised the study. A speaker of the American Dental Association said that the model has not sampled sufficient therapists to provide data that would justify the generalisation of the model to other states.

The organisation, which represents all dentists in the US, has long rejected the idea of permitting non-dentists to perform surgical procedures.

New evidence links mercury to Alzheimer’s

Dental patients with silver fillings are more likely to suffer from senile dementia of the Alzheimer’s type. In a review published in the latest Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease, researchers associated with universities in Boston (USA), Freiburg/Breisgau and Frankfurt (Oder), both in Germany, claim that symptoms of the condition were reproduced or accelerated when brain tissue was exposed to inorganic mercury, the main ingredient of amalgam.

Earlier studies of low-dose human exposure, such as to dentists and their staff, have shown that exposure to mercury is correlated with long-term neurological or psychological harm. The new review is one of the first that has found a systematic link between memory deficits and increased levels of mercury found in Alzheimer’s patients.

According to Prof. Harald Walach, Viadrina European University in Frankfurt (Oder), patients with silver fillings are exposed to 1 to 22 µg mercury per day, of which the majority accumulates in the brain. The metal binds with selenium, a substance responsible for preventing oxidative stress, which can lead to cell death and early ageing. Removing mercury from medical and ecological cycles could slow down cell death and prevent the development of dementia and possibly other forms of neurological disorders, including Parkinson, he added.

“The situation is similar to the early 1970s regarding smoking: substantial experimental evidence existed, but human studies were inconclusive at the time and were under attack by groups with a vested interest,” Prof. Walach told Dental Tribune Asia Pacific. “To wait until irrefutable evidence has accumulated is not the best option in view of what we already know about the toxic potential of mercury.”

Amalgam is still the most common type of filling used by dentists worldwide. It is banned in Sweden and restricted in Norway and Denmark.

(Edited by Daniel Zimmermann, DTI)
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