UK authorities issue warning over buying dental devices online

LONDON, UK: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the health authority that regulates all medicines and medical devices in the UK, has warned dentists not to purchase dental devices from the Internet. The alert was published after a counterfeit dental drill shattered while being used on a patient.

According to the MHRA, the number of counterfeit and non-CE-marked dental products sold online has risen significantly in recent years. The medical device CE mark, which is mandatory for certain products sold within the European Economic Area, signifies compliance with the essential safety requirements defined in the European medical device regulations. Devices that do not bear a legitimate CE mark may not have been tested for safety and could fail during use, risking injury to patients and users.

However, counterfeit dental medical devices can be difficult to distinguish from genuine devices.

Since 2012, the MHRA has issued a number of warnings about medical devices that could cause serious harm to patients, including alerts about counterfeit dental X-ray machines that emitted harmful levels of radiation and counterfeit dental curing lights that could result in poor quality fillings.

The agency recommended that dentists only buy medical devices from manufacturers and suppliers, who can demonstrate that the necessary legal requirements are being met.

A list of legitimate sources for dental devices can be found on the British Dental Industry Association’s website.

Teeth found in baby’s head

BALTIMORE, USA: Brain surgeons in the US have found multiple fully formed teeth inside a tumor mass that was growing in the centre of the brain of a 4-month-old child. The boy was initially admitted to a clinic in Baltimore after a routine paediatric visit owing to an increasing head circumference.

According to the case report, which was published online on Feb. 27 in the New England Journal of Medicine, the child underwent MRI of the brain after admission to the Johns Hopkins Children’s Center, which revealed a mass (4.1 cm × 4.0 cm × 3.5 cm) close to the hypothalamus. The doctors also identified structures near the mass similar to those of teeth in the mandible.

Upon surgical removal of the tumour, the surgeons found a number of teeth inside the mass, which was later identified as an adamantinomatous cranio-pharyngioma on pathological examination. Such slow-growing tumours arise from Rathke’s pouch, an embryonic precursor to the anterior pituitary, and consist of stratified squamous epithelium and wet keratin, and may be cystic. The cysts are filled with viscous yellow fluid containing cholesterol crystals. The doctors explained that histologically adamantinomatous cranio-pharyngiomas closely resemble some odontogenic tumours.

The surgery was performed about a year ago. According to the case report, since then the patient has required shunting for bilateral subdural hygromas, and received thyroid and adrenal hormone-replacement therapy. However, he is making good developmental progress and undergoes MRI regularly, the doctors said.