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 10,000 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 instances that kill harmful micro-

Infections 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 parodontitis.

Miswaks level toothpaste

LEIPZIG: Dentists at the King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, have found that teeth cleaning sticks or miswaks are as beneficial for oral health as toothpaste. The research identified a total of 18 substances that kill harmful microorganisms and protect gums.

EU bans mercury exports, not amalgam

Ake Schlemmann

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 chloralkali industry and production of vinyl-chloride monomer, the base 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 Barda

TOKYO: A claim by a group of 81 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 groups petition and other sources, a number of companies that relay dentists’ instructions to workshops in China before
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 Nukuro, an Asia adviser for the World Bank during an interview. “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’ relaxation of immigration regulations to attract doctors and nurses to help solve the crisis. “Demand is greater than the supply,” said Dr. Sunita Maheshwari, a paediatric cardiologist at King Edward Memorial hospital in Mumbai. Dr. Maheshwari said, “So what do they do? They poach from here.”

India is estimated to need 600,000 more doctors, 200,000 dental surgeons and one million nurses, as well as X-ray technicians, dental hygienists, physiotherapists and laboratory technicians. There is one nurse for every 1,000 patients in India, compared with about 11 for every 1,000 in Europe. India boasts of a flourishing “medical tourism” industry, with low-cost plastic surgery and other procedures at attractive fees, even if those countries have no restriction for dental products made in foreign countries. Though the incidents of contamination in China or India are nothing new, the ministry now plans to provide such teeth with a patient’s consent. The ministry now plans to establish a panel to examine the issue of foreign-made false teeth before the end of the fiscal year.

Safety concerns about dental work from emerging countries like China or India are nothing new, though the incidents of contaminated dental work appear to be relative isolated like those in the United States, the issue is far from being a distant memory. In Europe, for example, imports from Chinese labs make a steady flow from dental work “made in China” highly likely in the years to come. 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 tax being 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.

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 16,000 delegates from all over South East Asia. In addition to the upcoming 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.

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