Implant treatment woes high among Japanese dental patients

TOKYO, Japan: Findings from a recent survey of dentists in Japan have revealed that in 2011 one in four had seen patients with health complications due to dental implant treatment. Over 90 per cent of the dentists surveyed also reported having treated patients last year with problems related to implants placed by a colleague.

Pointing to the general risks of implant procedures, the Director of the Japanese Academy of Maxillofacial Implants Kanichi Seto told the Asahi Shim bun newspaper that some of the cases might be linked to dentists using clinically unsuitable methods or technologies. He called on patients suffering from problems after implant treatment to seek medical help at dental clinics immediately.

In Asia, Japan has the second highest penetration rate of dental implants after South Korea currently. According to figures from the AstraZeneca Group in London, UK, almost half a million implants were placed in the country in 2006, a figure that experts say has further increased in recent years, despite the recession and March 2011 tsunami.

Business figures from leading market players suggest that Japan’s dental implant market is growing by more than two per cent annually.

First dental implants were placed in Japan in the early 1970s. Although not covered by national dental insurance, the procedure has become a widely accepted treatment method among patients and dentists. The International Team for Implantology, a Straumann affiliate and one of the world’s largest providers of dental implant education, recently held its first Japanese congress in Tokyo in June.

Many patients in Japan seem to experience complications after dental implant surgery. (DTI/Photo Peng Guang Chen)

Thyroid drug could detect caries early

Researchers from India have successfully tested a method that could help dentists to identify children who are at risk of developing Early Childhood Caries, the highly virulent form of tooth decay. In clinical tests conducted on pre-schoolers from Mangalore, they reported a link between the children’s bitter taste perception of a drug used in the treatment of autoimmune disease and their oral health status.

According to the researchers, children who reacted to 6-n-propylthiouracil showed a greater dislike of sweet foods compared with those who could not taste the compound. They also had fewer dental problems than those who did not react to it.

Zhu to receive first FDI award

The FDI World Dental Federation has announced that China’s Minister for Health, Prof. Chen Zhu, will be the first recipient of the Inaugural World Oral Health Recognition Award. The 59-year-old haematologist was selected owing to his contributions to the development of dentistry in China, the organisation said.

Politically independent Zhu was appointed Minister of Health of the People’s Republic of China in early 2007. Since then, he has implemented reforms of the country’s health care system, which included the expansion of basic health coverage to urban and rural areas, among other things. According to FDI officials, the award will be given to Zhu officially during the opening ceremony of this year’s FDI Annual World Dental Congress in Hong Kong in August.

It is the first time that the FDI has awarded an individual for his or her contributions to dentistry.

Europe closer to amalgam ban

A new study, conducted on behalf of the European Commission, has recommended phasing out dental amalgam use over the next few years owing to mercury’s negative impact on the environment. The decision to effect a ban would probably be made in 2015, and become applicable five years later, the authors suggested.

Mobile phones under scrutiny

Emission from handheld mobile phones like heat and radio frequency radiation can cause functional and volumetric changes in the parotid glands. In tests with heavy users, researchers recently observed an increase in the salivary flow rate and the volume of parotid glands on the side of the head where mobile phones were frequently held.

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