India extends public dental health care with 2014 budget

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NEW DELHI, India: In his 2014 budget speech presented to the parliament in New Delhi, India’s Minister of Finance Arun Jaitley has proposed multimillion-ruppee funding for the establishment of a number of new government-run hospitals. The 12 institutions that he has said will be established in cities throughout the country will include treatment facilities for oral health care.

In addition to increased funding for public dental services, a new research and referral institute for higher dental studies is to be set up in one of the existing dental schools. The minister did not provide details, however, on where or when the institute will be established.

The measures are just two of a number of initiatives intended to improve access to health care for a large part of the Indian population. The additional investment in this sector for the next fiscal year will amount to 560 million rupees (US$8.5 million), according to Jaitley.

Commenting on the budget, which will also see tax reductions for low-income households and seniors, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the new budget will be a ray of hope for India.

India has confirmed that the dental records of all of the Malaysian victims of MH17 have been collected and sent to Europe for forensic identification. Forty-three Malaysian passengers were on board the flight, which is believed to have been shot down by pro-Russian rebels over the Ukraine in early July.

Mukherjee joins FDI AWDC

The president of India Pranab Mukherjee has accepted an invitation from the Indian Dental Association (PDA) in Pasay City at the recent 105th annual convention of the Philippine Dental Association (PDA) in Pasay City.

Union Minister for Finance, Corporate Affairs and Defence, Arun Jaitley (left) on his way to present the General Budget 2014/2015. (DTI/Photo: Press Information Bureau, India)

New caries initiative in the Philippines

A newly established chapter of the Alliance for a Cavity-Free Future in the Philippines is aiming to improve the country’s devastating state of oral health. Its goals presented to the public at the recent 105th annual convention of the Philippine Dental Association (PDA) in Pasay City include the development and nationwide implementation of caries prevention and management systems by 2020.

While the declaration was lacking in details, the initiative aims for every child born after 2026 to be cavity free. It said it will first target schools in particular in order to heighten awareness in the education sector that caries is a preventable disease and can result in a lower quality of life if untreated.

Fluoridation under review

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) has called for submissions from the Australian public on evidence regarding the health effects of water fluoridation. The council is preparing a review of its current recommendations on the subject to ensure that its advice is based on the latest scientific evidence.

On behalf of NHMRC, a team at the University of Sydney will undertake a systematic review focused on scientific studies submitted by the Australian community that examine the effects of water fluoridation on human health published from 1 October 2006. Once the review is complete, NHMRC will prepare a draft information paper summarising the findings, on which the public will have the opportunity to comment.

Currently, the council recommends that water be fluoridated at the level of 0.6 to 1.1 mg/l, a level that is believed to help reduce tooth decay among Australian people without causing dental fluorosis.
Cochrane reports no evidence for superior long-term success of dental implants

A representative of Straumann also cautioned against the results, saying that the review reflects the fact that there is very little or no published clinical data on the majority of commercially available dental implants, since they have not been clinically tested.

He emphasised that all of the implants available today only 58 tested in randomised controlled clinical trials were considered worthy of review.

“With regard to our own implants, the review excluded studies that we and others feel are important. Furthermore, it did not consider the large body of bench tests and preclinical trials that demonstrate significant differences in some cases,” the representative told Dental Tribune Asia Pacific.

According to the Cochrane Collaboration, there are more than 1,500 different dental implants available on the market today. The total value of fixed tooth replacements was estimated to be US$3.4 billion in 2011, a figure that some analysts expect to almost double in the next five years owing to the increasing demand of an ageing population and more dentists starting to place dental implants.
Patients in Australia favour receiving rapid HIV testing

SYDNEY, Australia: Despite the necessary technology having been available for a number of years already, rapid HIV testing is not yet widely offered in dental settings around the world. A study, which included 521 dental patients from Sydney in Australia, now found that more than 80 per cent of oral health patients are willing to undergo such tests during dental appointments. Seventy-six per cent of those willing to receive rapid HIV testing at the dentist’s office preferred an oral swab, 15 per cent a pin prick test, and 8 per cent a traditional blood test, it also showed.

“Dentists are well placed to offer rapid HIV testing because they are located throughout the community, have ongoing relationships with their patients, and have the necessary training and expertise to recognise systemic diseases that have oral manifestations, such as HIV/AIDS,” said Dr Anthony Santella, a public health scientist who led the study. He added that about 45 per cent of dentists are currently willing to conduct rapid HIV testing.

According to the 2014 Annual Surveillance Report, a comprehensive analysis of HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections in Australia provided by the Kirby Institute, approximately 14 per cent of all HIV cases in Australia are undiagnosed. The institute estimates that 24,500–30,900 people are living with HIV in Australia. Moreover, patients in Australia will soon be able to buy rapid oral HIV tests over the counter. At the beginning of the month, the government removed restrictions preventing the manufacture and sale of HIV home self-tests. Now, companies can sell such tests directly to consumers.