

Europe Ticker +++

European Health Data Space (EHDS)

Interoperability and the connected healthcare system

At the EU level, discussions are well underway on the European Commission's proposed regulation to create a European Health Data Space (EHDS). The aim of the EHDS is to connect national healthcare systems in an interoperable way to enable the secure transfer of healthcare data. Patients should be able to access their minimum data sets (MDS) across the EU, such as prescriptions, lab results, X-rays, discharge reports and vaccination records. In addition, health data should be made available for secondary use in health research or policy-making. In a comprehensive position paper, the German Dental Association (BZÄK) welcomes the plan, but on the condition that the current principles of informational self-determination, data protection and data security are maintained. In addition, dental practices should not be burdened with additional duties—staff shortages are already severe enough. If practices incur extra costs, they should be fully reimbursed.

Public good research based on health data should be facilitated but should be based on structured data suitable for answering specific questions and be made available at reasonable cost.

Source: *German Dental Association*

Dental chains in Spain

Patients abandoned

With treatments paid for in advance but never completed, many dental patients in Spain are facing closed doors. Several dental chains—iDental, Funnydent, Dental Line, Dentix and since March also Smydent—have ceased operations. The consumer organisation Facua speculates that these chains are bankrupt. Patients will probably have to go to court to get back the money they paid in advance for incomplete treatments.

Speaking at the spring meeting of the Federation of European Dental Competent Authorities and Regulators (FEDCAR) in early May, Óscar Castro Reino, President of the Spanish Dental Association, renewed calls for the effective application of a long-standing law that requires any company providing dental services to be in the hands of dentists and subject to the ethical principles of professional law. In this context, the association pointed out that one of the owners and founders of Smydent is not a dentist, and once again called on the Ministry of Health to respond appropriately to prevent further scandalous developments of this kind.

In addition to the clinic in central Madrid, Smydent also had clinics in Torrejón, Alcorcón and Leganés, San Blas, Vallecas and Badalona. The affected patients are now planning to file a class action lawsuit against the chain.

Source: *zm, Germany*

Artificial intelligence put to the test

Is ChatGPT better?

According to a study conducted at the University of California at San Diego, ChatGPT provided better answers to patients' questions almost eight out of ten times. Experts rated the chatbot's responses as being of higher quality and more empathetic. The study compared written responses from physicians to real-world health questions from an online forum with those from ChatGPT. To obtain a large and diverse sample of health questions and physicians' responses that did not contain identifiable personal information, the team turned to social media where millions of patients publicly post medical questions to which physicians respond: Reddit's AskDocs. The team randomly selected 195 exchanges from AskDocs in which a verified physician responded to a public question. Of these, 182 consisted of a single question and a single answer. In the remaining 13 cases, the doctors wrote two separate responses. The team submitted the original question to ChatGPT and documented its answer. A panel of three qualified health professionals from paediatrics, geriatrics and internal medicine assessed the quality and



emphatic nature of the (blinded) replies. In nearly 79 per cent of the 585 assessments, raters preferred the chatbot's responses to the physicians' responses. The percentage of responses perceived as "good" or "very good" was higher for the chatbot than for physicians (physicians: 22.1 per cent, 16.4 to 28.2 per cent; chatbot: 78.5 per cent, 72.3 to 84.1 per cent). At the same time, the panel was almost 10 times more likely to rate artificial intelligence responses as "empathetic" or "very empathetic" than physician responses (physicians: 4.6 per cent, 2.1 to 7.7 per cent; chatbot: 45.1 per cent, 38.5 to 51.8 per cent).

Source: University of California

WHO recommendations on oral health

Networking national strategies globally

The key WHO recommendations to governments in the new report are:

- Develop new national oral health strategies that are consistent with the WHO Global Oral Health Strategy and national strategies for the control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and for universal health coverage (UHC); allocate staff and resources to oral health in ministries of health.
- Implement measures to reduce the intake of free sugars, such as mandatory nutrition labelling of pre-packaged foods, setting targets to reduce the sugar content of foods and beverages, enforcing public procurement measures to reduce the supply of sugary foods, taking measures to protect children from the harmful effects of food marketing, and imposing taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages and sugary foods.
- Integrate oral health care into primary health care at all levels of care, with the necessary staffing, skill mix, and competencies.
- Develop an innovative oral health workforce model to meet the oral health needs of the population.

Source: WHO

100 years of the Irish Dental Association

The Irish branch of the BDA

The Irish Dental Association (IDA) is celebrating its 100th anniversary. The IDA dates back to 1887, when an Irish branch of the British Dental Association (BDA) formed in Dublin, which split off and became independent in 1922 during the revolution. The IDA was considered the leading voice of the dental profession in the 20th century and participated in major public health campaigns, such as the inclusion of dentistry in the health insurance system and the fluoridation of drinking water in the 1960s. More recently, the IDA has been at the forefront of advocating for health insurance reform and raising public awareness of the importance of dental health.

The new (and thus 100th) IDA President is Dr Eamon Croke, who was appointed at the beginning of May, replacing outgoing President Caroline Robbins after her one-year term. Croke wants to continue the reforms in dentistry and make continuing professional development (CPD) mandatory for the profession. Over the past 15 years, he said, the number of dentists in private practice had fallen by almost nearly a quarter (23 per cent), leading to an extreme backlog in children's dental examinations.

Source: zm, Germany