

Europe Ticker +++

Anger unleashed against dentists in the UK

Patient frustration over lack of access to dental care



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Frustration over exorbitant waiting times for appointments is fuelling anger against dental professionals in the UK. In a Dental Protection survey of over 1,300 UK dental professionals, more than half (57%) said they had experienced or witnessed verbal or physical abuse from patients or their relatives in the last 12 months. Of these, 64% said the incidents were due to frustration at waiting too long for an appointment and 59% said it was due to not getting the treatment they expected. In addition, 58% of those affected reported that the violence, disrespect and anger they experienced or witnessed had impaired their mental health, and over a third (37%) said an increase in abuse and intimidation from patients had made them reconsider their career in dentistry. Almost a third of dental professionals (31%) also feel that abuse against dental professionals is not taken seriously by the police.

Source: Dental Protection Survey 2023

Irish Dental Association complains

Too few dental screenings in Irish schools

More than 100,000 Irish children were denied dental appointments for school screenings in 2023, according to the Irish Dental Association (IDA). There has been a 31% reduction in these appointments since 2019. Fintan Hourihan, CEO of the IDA, said, "The Health Service Executive (HSE) has failed to deliver in its duty to provide appropriate care to patients under the Health Act. Over 50% of school children have been denied access to dental care under this scheme. This represents a 31% reduction in the number of school children screened since 2019 despite a 7.3% increase in the population." The IDA is therefore calling for the immediate allocation of additional funding to the public dental service.

Source: Irish Dental Association

Mon Espace Santé (MES) in France

Digital patient file works

In France, more than 95% of people with social insurance use the country's digital patient file (Mon Espace Santé [MES], which translates as "My Health Space"). This was introduced in January 2022 and is an opt-out solution, meaning that people with social insurance had to actively opt out, says David Sainati, deputy head of the digitalisation department at the French Ministry of Health. Insured persons are able to access their data in a special online area, which will also be accessible to doctors.

Sainati explains the high take-up to the opt-out rule; in addition, the French state has earmarked an extra two billion euros to synchronise existing social security data and feed it into the new system. However, Sainati is certain that successful implementation of a system like this depends on the various interfaces. If the software is not fully adapted from the outset, then the systems cannot be interconnected. This is why France set up a task force in the run-up to the implementation of MES, which proceeded sector after sector and carefully studied the challenges faced by users. The aim was to make the system compatible and homogeneous.

To ensure that the system is financially viable, France has a new financing mechanism, Sainati adds. For example, pharmacists and doctors have bought applications from the state to update interfaces between the MES and their own IT systems. This money can be used to further develop the systems and their interfaces.

Source: Deutsches Ärzteblatt

British Dental Association reports

Sugar levy delivers the goods

The United Kingdom introduced a Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) in April 2018. The British Dental Association (BDA) told the FDI World Dental Federation about the impact – and why it is in favour of extending it. The SDIL was announced in 2016 and came into effect in April 2018. The levy applies to sugar-sweetened beverages and is designed to encourage manufacturers to reduce the sugar content of their products and offer consumers healthier options. As the BDA has now explained to the FDI, the measure generated the equivalent of £355 million [€414 million] in the 2022/2023 fiscal year alone. In 2021/2022, it had yielded £334 million (€390 million), and in 2020/2021, £299 million (€350 million). There are two rates of this levy, depending on the sugar content of the beverage: the “standard rate” (18p/€0.21 per litre) that applies to drinks with a total sugar content of 5 g to under 8 g per 100 ml, and the “higher rate” (24p/€0.28 per litre) that applies to drinks with a total sugar content of 8 g or more per 100 ml. Beverages with less than 5 g of sugar per 100 ml are exempt.



In November 2023, a study published in the *British Medical Journal* showed that the sugar levy was associated with 12.1 per cent fewer hospital admissions for tooth extraction among minors. The effect was particularly pronounced in children under the age of four (28.6 per cent). In light of this success, the BDA is calling for the levy to be extended, for example to include milk-based drinks, biscuits and sweets, to encourage consumers to choose products that are less harmful to oral and systemic health. The measure could also help to promote the conversion of foods with a high sugar content without increasing costs for consumers.

Source: British Dental Association

German Dental Association appeals to the EU Parliament

12 key demands from Germany



The German Dental Association (BZÄK) has issued a position paper to the new EU Parliament. According to the BZÄK, the importance of the EU for the dental profession has increased significantly since the last European elections five years ago. In a recently published position paper, the organisation points out that many issues that are critical for the dental profession are no longer decided at a national level, but in Brussels and Strasbourg. One of the key demands is to maintain the responsibility of the EU member states for their health care systems.

The BZÄK is also calling for a rapid revision of the EU legal framework for medical devices. Digitalisation in the healthcare sector must be for the benefit of patients and should lead to improved and less bureaucratic care. The BZÄK calls for less bureaucracy for dental practices and a consistent continuation of the fight against antibiotic resistance. Freedom of treatment and decision-making must be protected throughout Europe—the BZÄK warned against the erosion in quality as a consequence of the reduction of services provided by independent dentists in favour of dental chains run by financial investors.

The BZÄK calls on the EU Parliament to support the European Charter of the Liberal Professions in order to define the position of the liberal professions at European level. Other issues include free access to dental care for all EU citizens and to the improvement of oral health prevention in the EU.

Source: German Dental Association