

Dentophobia

More common in women than men

[PICTURE: ©ZAMETALOV]



Dentophobia is equally common in both men and women. However, a new study has found that the level of disgust they experience with regard to dental treatment may differ significantly. In the study, 36 individuals with dentophobia (18 men and 18 women) and 36 non-dentophobic controls were asked to rate their arousal, disgust and fear while looking at images of dental treatment scenes and images depicting neutral scenes. Simultaneously, their heart rate and the activity of the musculus levator labii, a muscle used in pro-

totypical facial disgust expression, producing nose wrinkles and upper lip retraction, were recorded electronically. Overall, male and female participants did not differ in their self-ratings. However, there were significant differences in facial expressions. According to the researchers, only dentophobic women showed enhanced disgust-related facial activity, indicating that targeting of disorder-specific disgust might be of great importance in the therapy of dentophobic women.

Although dentophobic men perceived dental treatment scenes as equally disgusting as did women, they displayed significantly lower disgust-related facial activity. However, the researchers suggested that male participants might have been more successful in inhibiting behavioural reactions. The study, titled "Can you read my pokerface? A study on sex differences in dentophobia", was published online on 12 September in the *European Journal of Oral Sciences* and will appear in the October issue. It was conducted at the University of Graz.

Poor dental health

May lead to Alzheimer's

People with poor oral hygiene or gum disease may be at a greater risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, a study led by the University of Central Lancashire's (UCLan) School of Medicine and Dentistry has found. For their study, the researchers examined samples from the donated brains of ten peo-

ple without dementia and ten people with dementia. The research found the presence of products from *Porphyromonas gingivalis* in the brains of dementia patients.

The research benefited from donated brain samples provided by Brains for Dementia Research, a brain donation scheme supported by Alzheimer's Research UK and Alzheimer's Society. Finding *P. gingivalis* in the brains of dementia sufferers is significant, as its presence in the brains of Alzheimer's disease patients has not been documented previously and the finding adds to a growing body of evidence that suggests an association between poor oral health and dementia.

These published research findings from human brain specimens are further supported by recent unpublished research on periodontal disease from the same group using animal models, which was carried out in collaboration with the University of Florida. This animal work has confirmed that *P. gingivalis* in the mouth finds its way to the brain once periodontal disease has become established.

Chewing popcorn may disturb

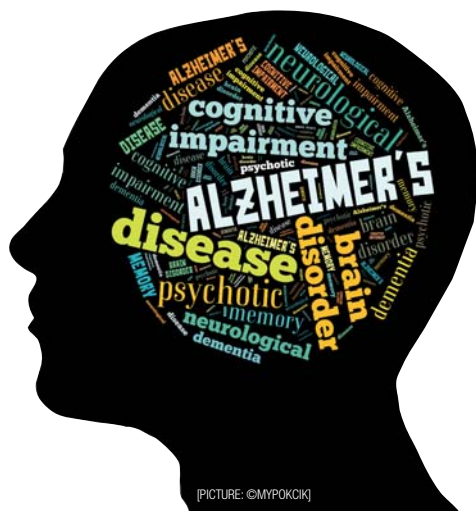
Moviegoers' perception of commercials

Psychologists from Germany have suggested that eating popcorn disrupts the way people process and remember brand names. In a recently published study, participants were invited to a movie theatre and were shown a block of foreign commercials prior to the film. Half of the participants were given popcorn to eat, while



the other participants chewed gum or ate a single sugar cube. When the participants were presented with images of products one week after the cinema session, those who had eaten the sugar cubes exhibited higher preference and physiological responses for the brands advertised. In contrast, the participants who had consumed popcorn or gum during the commercials showed no evidence of advertising effects, the researchers said. According to researchers from the University of Cologne, the advertised products were less familiar to the participants owing to the fact that their mouth was obstructed when they were watching the commercials. Prior studies have shown that subvocal pronunciation, a covert mechanism of the mouth, is very important to the perception of information about new brands. The researchers said that each time a person encounters a new name the lips and the tongue automatically simulate the pronunciation of the name. Because they were chewing, the participants could not internally train the articulation of the brands' names.

The researchers concluded that advertising might remain unsuccessful in situations involving oral interference, such as snacking or talking. The study, titled "Popcorn in the cinema: Oral interference sabotages advertising effects", was published online on 29 September in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* ahead of print.



[PICTURE: ©MYPKCIK]