

On reflection

Siobhan Hiscott reports back from the British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy Oral Health Conference in Belfast

This year's British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy (BSDHT) Oral Health Conference hit all the right notes, leaving delegates with fresh inspiration to take home and apply in practice.

With a comprehensive and diverse programme covering many aspects of dental health, the conference saw 500 delegates walk through the doors of Belfast's Waterfront Hall over 18 and 19 November 2016.

Looking at the big topics in oral and general health, the conference gave dental hygienists and therapists the opportunity to get a fresh perspective on the wider impact of their profession, helping them look beyond the teeth and gums to a patient's overall health.

The theme of 'perspectives' reflected that perfectly, with world-renowned speakers discussing a range of topics such as inflammatory disease, external head and face cancers, infection control, radiography, peri-implantitis and more.

Kicking off

After an energetic start to the opening morning thanks to a group of Irish dancers, Michaela O'Neill welcomed the four chief dental officers (CDOs) of the UK to the stage to present an update from their area.

Simon Reid spoke about the dental services in Northern Ireland, and the role of the dental team. Wales' recently installed CDO, Colette



Bridgman, introduced the nation's Designed to Smile initiative, and the importance of 'only doing what you can do'. Scotland's CDO, Margie Taylor, talked about the nation's oral health plan, and Eric Rooney, deputy CDO for England, gave an update on where the country is currently at with oral health.

Questions were encouraged from the audience after the presentations, which saw the CDOs tackling issues surrounding plans for dental hygienists and therapists being able to prescribe.

The BSDHT has lobbied hard for its members to be able to prescribe, and it looks like now it'll be a case of when, rather than if, this happens. Indeed, while the major steps have been taken to move on with exemptions to prescribing, the BSDHT has stated that, with its members' support, it will 'battle on' to lobby until dental hygienists and therapist get what they need.

Hot topics

Under the theme of perspectives, the BSDHT brought some of dentistry's hottest topics – implants, radiography, and cancer – to the conference and presented them with different slants.



Helen Minnery, the newly-appointed BSDHT president, took up her post at the conference

But it was some of the more unconventional topics – such as fluorides and fluorosis, as well as the effect of nutritional influences and cytokines on inflammation – that caught the attention of some delegates.

As part of a series entitled 'How diverse is your career?', sessions explored dentolegal careers, the role a dental hygienist/therapist can play on 'from concept to consumer' and equine dentistry.

Sarah, a final year dental hygiene and therapy





Poster girls: the poster competition returned to the conference and proved its popularity with plenty of entrants



Kay Franks with her winning poster, 'Entry knowledge of bachelor of oral health therapy students on diet, nutrition and preventive oral healthcare'



Delegates took full advantage of the trade exhibition, where company reps were on hand to showcase the latest materials and equipment available to dental hygienists and therapists



student at Queen Mary University, London, commented: 'I've found the conference really, really good. I've especially enjoyed seeing how diverse a career it can be. The lecture about equine dentistry was interesting, and seeing the options was great for me personally.'

In focus

Delegates were treated to numerous lectures on dental implants over the two days, which explored some of the latest literature for peri-implantitis, selecting the right tools for implant maintenance as well as implant-supported orofacial rehabilitation of the cancer patient.

Presenting 'Peri-implantitis: what do we know and where are we heading', Ian Dunn looked at anatomy, risk factors and prevalence before discussing teeth versus implants and treatment of peri-implant disease.

Imogen and Danielle, both final year dental hygiene and therapy students at Queen Mary's,

London, agreed that Ian's lecture was very informative. 'The lectures have been excellent; I especially enjoyed Ian Dunn's peri-implantitis talk as I know this is going to be a big bulk of my career,' said Imogen.

The session's focus centred on prevention; 'It is key,' said Ian. As many risk factors are known for implant treatment, a risk assessment has to take place before placement should happen. The first question to consider is why the patient lost teeth in the first place.

When it comes to implant maintenance, Ian believes probing (with metal instruments for greater accuracy) is a must; he said: 'If we don't, we'll find disease when it's too late.'

Plans for the future

The conference was the natural forum for the BSDHT's annual general meeting to take place, which saw a number of updates and plans shared, including the launch of BSDHT Indemnity

and plans for the society to set up permanent headquarters.

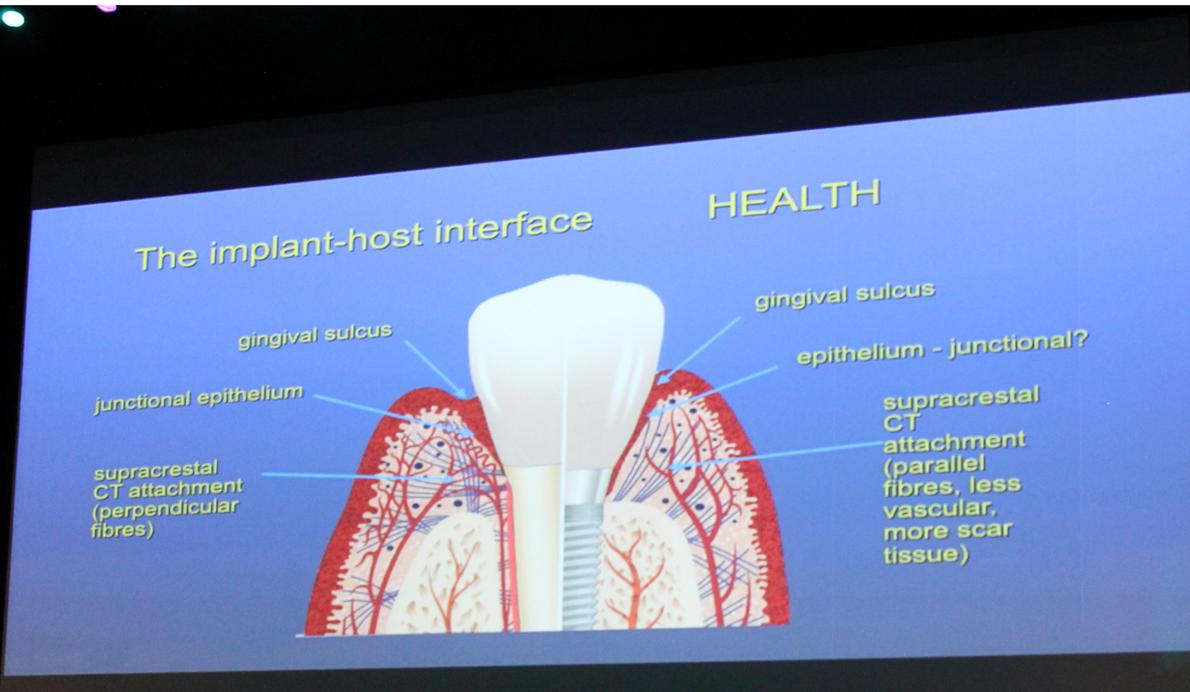
With all the society's affairs up-to-date, it was time to install Helen Minnery as the new BSDHT president.

During her valedictory speech, Michaela said: 'It's been an absolute honour to represent the society. Thank you for the opportunity to learn more about myself than I ever thought possible. And I'll be forever grateful for the chance to help to mould our profession.

'We are a voice to be reckoned with. The BSDHT is an incredibly well-respected body in dentistry: we are progressive and persuasive and will work together for the best of our profession.'

Michaela thanked the society before giving a warm welcome to Helen, her successor, who explained what she hoped to tackle during her tenure as president.

'What has become apparent to me is the large proportion of issues that arise between



A commitment to oral health is needed from implant patients, in addition to regular, supportive, professional care



Ian Dunn's session on peri-implantitis explored what we currently know and speculated on where we are heading

dental hygienists and therapists and the practice manager,' explained Helen. 'I would like to work to forge some links with ADAM: the Association of Dental Administrators and Managers.'

She added: 'I still feel that many dentists – young or old – still don't understand the scope of practice of a dental hygienist or therapist, or the important role we play within their practice and how we fit into their business plan.'

'I am hoping to produce some guidance for our members to help them show that having a dental hygienist or dental therapist is an asset from a business point of view.'

Poster prizes

The conference saw the return of the BSDHT's annual poster competition, sponsored by Waterpik.

The impressive display of posters represented individual and group research projects in oral health and hygiene. It covered subjects such as promoting oral self-care for children and parents, obstructive sleep apnoea and its effect on the oral cavity, the trigeminal neuralgia patient, and the dental anatomy of wild and domestic animals

We are progressive and persuasive and will work together for the best of our profession

– to name just a few.

Each entrant delivered a poster presentation to a judging panel composed of Ian Dunn (specialist periodontist and senior clinical teacher at Liverpool University), Marina Harris (past BSDHT president, lecturer and academic currently undertaking a PhD at the University of Portsmouth), and Deborah Lyle (director of professional and clinical affairs at Waterpik International).

Kay Franks, lecturer at the University of Newcastle in Australia, took first place for her work on 'Entry knowledge of bachelor of oral health therapy students on diet, nutrition and

preventive oral healthcare.'

A team comprising dental hygienist Phoebe Purcell and University of Essex lecturer Camille Cronin were highly commended for their poster entitled 'Oral health in care homes: a patient and public involvement project in the local community.'

Danielle Shaw from Queen Mary University in London, Bart's and the London Dental Hospital received the Student Award for her poster on 'Aesthetic management of non-carious enamel hypoplasia using minimally invasive dentistry.'

Your society

With a programme centred around looking beyond teeth and gum wellbeing to how oral health issues affect a patient's overall health, and a large trade exhibition showing delegates the latest, hottest tools and trends on the marketplace, the Oral Health Conference certainly offered its delegates a new perspective.

As Helen said: 'The reign of BSDHT is a team effort. The larger we are as a society, the bigger the voice we have. Please support BSDHT – this is your society.' ■