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AWARENESS CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED TO PREVENT UNNECESSARY TOOTH REMOVAL

During the month of March 2011 leading dental professionals are launching the Saving Teeth Awareness Campaign - www.savingteeth.co.uk - to provide information to patients who have a tooth infection that could result in tooth loss. The campaign was prompted by the widespread lack of awareness amongst patients that many teeth can be saved by endodontics (root canal therapy).

Recent figures for the NHS show that two million teeth were removed last year but only approximately half a million root treatments were undertaken*. The options for replacing a lost tooth might be a bridge, a denture or an implant. In the interests of dental health, however, if the natural tooth can be saved through root canal therapy and adequately restored, it should be first choice.

The campaign's key messages are:

- Saving a tooth is, where possible, better for the health of your mouth.
- A well root-treated tooth covered with a crown can survive for many years if not for the rest of your life.

- If a tooth becomes infected and left untreated bone loss can occur.

Backing for the Saving Teeth Awareness Campaign, spearheaded by root canal specialist Julian Webber, a world leader in the field of endodontics and his colleague and endodontic specialist, Trevor Lamb, is growing. Supporters include recognised authorities in areas such as restorative dentistry, oral surgery, and the psychology of dentistry along with patients and high profile supporters Michael Winner and Peter Snow.

The campaign would like to see the NHS recognising and remunerating the additional skills and costly equipment used by specialists and dentists with additional training. With new dental payment systems about to be piloted next month (April), and widespread agreement that the NHS should be rewarding quality, it is an ideal time to introduce commissioning of specialist treatment in general practice.

Julian Webber says:

“While an extraction is sometimes inevitable, it should not be regarded as the easy option. It’s true that it can be carried out quickly but afterwards, many patients will not want a gap in their mouth and will seek some form of replacement, whether it’s an implant, bridge or denture and these take time. Keeping your natural teeth is often more economical in the long-term as well as being better for health.”

The recent Adult Dental Health Survey* shows that thirty per cent of all adults are extremely anxious about having a tooth drilled. However, modern local anaesthetics can ensure that all dental procedures that involve drilling, including root canal treatment, are painless. Professor Tim Newton, Professor of Psychology as applied to Dentistry, comments: “When you feel anxious it’s not easy to make choices. Fear of dental treatment remains a significant barrier to dental care for many people. People who are anxious will often avoid dental treatment, and when they do attend often make decisions which they might not make if they were less anxious – for example to have teeth extracted rather than have to attend for more appointments for treatment to restore their teeth.”

In the United States, Root Canal Awareness Week starts at the end of this month with the aim of teaching the public that root canal treatment shouldn’t be feared, and that endodontists can provide a virtually pain-free experience. In support of their Root Canal Awareness Week, the American Association of Endodontists carried out a survey which reveals that 70 percent of Americans fear losing a natural tooth although that same percentage also fears root canal treatment, the exact procedure that can save their teeth.

Nigel Carter, Chief Executive of the British Dental Health Foundation, described root canal therapy as “a vital tool” in the battle to maintain improvements in oral health, and said: “The Foundation thoroughly supports the aims of the Saving Teeth Awareness Campaign in raising public awareness of the value of root canal therapy as one of the means

available to today's modern dentist to help ensure all of the public achieve healthy teeth for life."

Jeff Foulser, a patient who has had root canal treatment, says:

"I remember both my parents taking their teeth out and putting them in a glass beside their bed. It's certainly not what I want. I think it's a great idea to have a campaign to remind us all of the value of root treatment and seeing your dentist."

Campaign supporter, Peter Snow, concludes:

"It may surprise you that it is well known within the medical profession that those with a healthy mouth live longer. The Saving Teeth Awareness Campaign aims to encourage patients to keep their teeth for life".

For more information or to add your support visit www.savingteeth.co.uk

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Notes to Editors:

1. For interviews with Julian Webber or Trevor Lamb, dental professionals and patients please call the numbers above.

2. ***Numbers of NHS root canal treatment and extractions:**
http://www.ic.nhs.uk/webfiles/publications/007_Primary_Care/Dentistry/clinicaldental0910/Clinical_Dental_Report_England_and_Wales_200910-Experimental_Statistics.Report.pdf
3. ***Adult Dental Health Survey:**Adult Dental Health Survey:<http://www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/primary-care/dentistry/adult-dental-health-survey--2009-first-release>
4. For more on the American Association of Endodontists and Root Canal Awareness Week: <http://www.aae.org>