**Interview: “We definitely passed a tipping point for 3-D printers”**

By Brendan Day, DTI

**The fight against dental caries has progressed in many ways in which patients can protect and improve their oral health. After much intensity in terms of published articles on a study into the potential use of berry extract to combat decay-causing bacteria, vice president and general manager at 3D Systems, Sebastiaan Cornelissen, spoke with lead researcher Dr Nebu Philip, from the University of Queensland in Australia, to discuss this new discovery in more detail.**

**What was the basis of your research concept?**

We sought to identify an appropriate natural product. Dark-coloured fruit berries are known to contain a variety of phytochemicals beneficial to health. The availability of commercial fruit berry extracts with standardised phytochemical concentrations offered the possibility of testing these polyphenol-rich extracts against key cariogenic bacterial virulence properties. We progressed from a series of laboratory studies to a double-blinded randomised controlled trial in high caries-risk patients. We have presently completed all these studies and are planning our next clinical trial in a larger cohort of patients.

**What do you think the most interesting results were?**

The ability of the berry extracts, especially the cranberry extract, to significantly inhibit Streptococcus mutans virulence without affecting bacterial viability was probably the most interesting result. This suggests the possibility of incorporating the cranberry extracts into a daily use oral care product, for example a mouthwash or dentifrice, to reduce cariogenic virulence without affecting health-associated bacterial species in dental plaque, an important advancement over commonly used synthetic biocides, like chlorhexidine.

**Do you have further research plans to develop a new oral health product?**

The results of our first clinical trial were encouraging. After further clinical studies, we intend to ultimately develop a daily use oral care product with a natural substance incorporated into it to protect against dental caries. Watch this space!
New realistic mouth models aim to improve dental education

By DTI

BIRMINGHAM, UK: New research being carried out in collaboration with the University of Birmingham will allow dental students to train on dental models that possess the tactile qualities of real mouths. Among the applications will be learning how to use periodontal probes to check for periodontal disease. The project is being run by Dr Michael Milward, a reader and honorary consultant in periodontics at the university’s School of Dentistry, Dr Paul Cooper, Professor of Oral Biology at the school, and Richard Arm, a senior research fellow at Nottingham Trent University in the UK. The models feature realistic gingivae and tongues to allow students to learn how to examine the mouth and check for disease safely. Both the tongue and the gingivae are made from synthetic gels and fibres and vary in hardness to mimic living tissue, whereas the teeth and jaw bones are made from bone-simulating resin.

“These models meet an unmet need in dental education and will allow us to better prepare our students for clinical work,” said Milward. “The feedback we have received from students and staff has been extremely positive and the final version has already been introduced into undergraduate teaching,” he continued. “While some models are commercially available, no models combine the replica hard and soft tissues in this way to provide a realistic learning experience.”

According to Milward, these developments provide a huge step forward in dental education and benefit not only dental students, but also the retraining dental workforce and patients. The researchers aim to further enhance the models to allow dental students to evolve additional clinical skills.

“The aim is to give students the psychological experience of how it feels to perform real dentistry, but in a safe learning environment,” said Arm. “Until now, current dental models haven’t provided a realistic enough experience for students and the inclusion of a tongue will mimic the challenge which dentists face and better prepare them for their first clinic.”

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