Oral health is very important for denture wearers because of potential impact to their systemic health

Dental Tribune UK Editor, Lisa Townshend, reviews the GSK-Supported Symposium, Impact of Tooth Loss on Oral and Systemic Health, at FDI World Dental Congress

As new evidence emerges about denture plaque and biofilms, the indication of an increased risk to denture wearers in the development of oral and systemic diseases is an issue that needs to be discussed.

At the FDI’s Annual World Dental Congress, held recently in Brazil, GSK-supported a timely symposium dedicated to the importance of denture and oral hygiene in denture wearers and its potential impact on their oral and systemic health.

Key messages from this symposium included:

• Unclean dentures are a chronic source of potentially harmful bacteria and fungi that may be associated with oral and systemic diseases

• Dentures need to be cleaned daily with effective antimicrobial and antifungal agents

• Dental professionals play an important role in educating patients and helping them improve their oral and overall health.

An international panel of experts was chaired by Professor Claudio Fernandes, Prof of Prosthodontics, Fluminense Federal University at Nova Friburgo, Brazil.

Prof Fernandes highlighted the growing edentulous population globally, the resultant oral health implications, and the role of dental professionals in dealing with associated issues. He commented: ‘Dentists must take a look beyond how dentures are fitting and functioning; dentures must integrate into patients’ health. If they are fulfilling their function, we are really restoring health for patients’.

The speakers and their key points:

• Dr Zvi Loewy, VP of Dental Care R&D at GSK, and on the faculty of New York Medical College and Drexel University, US, looked at Edentulism: Public Health Impact. Prevalence of denture wearing patients ranges from 12% to 65% globally. Studies show an increased risk of certain systemic diseases in denture wearing patients, which has an impact on the public health system.

• Dr Angus Walls, Professor of Restorative Dentistry and Director of Research, School of Dental Sciences, Newcastle University, UK, discussed Implications of Oral Health and Nutrition on Systemic Health. Dietary changes associated with the loss of teeth can result in an unhealthy diet, low in fruits and vegetables and with increased fats and sugars. Denture stability is key to improving confidence in chewing ability, and is one of the parameters necessary to help patients improve diet and quality of life. The use of denture adhesives may help to stabilize the dentures or help improve masticatory efficiency. Evidence shows that edentulous patients’ nutritional intake declines, the function of the immune system and body repair is suppressed; perfect conditions for the development of oral and systemic diseases.

• Dr Wenyuan Shi, Chairman and Professor of Oral Biology, UCLA School of Dentistry, and Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, UCLA School of Medicine, US, discussed Microbiology of Denture Patients, and reiterated the deep connection between microbiology and dental diseases. Between 65-80% of denture patients have stomatitis caused by Candida albicans and Candida glabrata, and other pathogens present on dentures are implicated in respiratory and GI infections. He advocated the elimination of microbial pathogens on dentures as very important.

• Dr Steven Offenbacher, OraPharma Distinguished Professor of Periodontal Medicine, Chairman of the Department of Periodontology, School of Dentistry, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, US, presented on Strategic Approaches for Denture Wearing Based on Periodontal and Prosthodontal Research. He detailed the importance of edentulism in systemic diseases, not as a major cause, but more as a risk factor.

• Dr Angus Walls reiterated that dentures carry high levels of many infectious organisms. Denture wearing is associated with increased risk of several systemic diseases including COPD, heart diseases, atherosclerosis, hypertension and diabetes. ‘Basically research suggests that patients need to do a better job at cleaning dentures on a daily basis and we as clinicians need to be very careful that we are reducing the source of infection in the mouth.’

The symposium was very well attended and well received by the delegates. One delegate commented: ‘this symposium was outstanding and made my trip worthwhile’. Another delegate said: ‘the symposium was very interesting and it brought together research experts from all over the world to help delegates understand better the importance of good oral health in denture wearers, and the need for healthcare professionals to focus on it.’

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