Researchers at Deakin University in Melbourne in Australia have announced the results of a recent study that indicate that caffeine may increase consumption of soft drinks. The researchers have thus called for stronger regulation of caffeine as an additive in food because it appears to be a major contributor to obesity and other health issues, such as dental caries in the general population.

The study included 99 individuals aged 18 to 30, who were blindly assigned to either a caffeinated sugar-sweetened beverage or a non-caffeinated sugar-sweetened beverage group. The level of caffeine in the drinks was equal to that in commercially available cola-flavoured beverages. The participants consumed as much or as little of their respective beverages as desired over a period of 28 days.

Overall, participants who drank caffeinated drinks consumed much more than those who drank the non-caffeinated equivalent, the researchers stated. While the first group had an average intake of 419 ml per day, the remainder drank only 273 ml per day.

“Our findings clearly show that caffeine as an additive in soft drinks increased consumption and with it sugar calories, and that is a significant public health issue given the prevalence of obesity,” said Dr Lynn Riddell, senior author and associate professor at the Faculty of Health.

An estimated 36 million people in the US alone suffer from hearing loss. Although surgically implanted hearing aid devices have been used effectively for many years, not all patients are eligible for this procedure. Researchers have now developed a new technology that could help deaf patients hear through a retainer in their mouth.

The new technology, which was developed at Colorado State University, relies on a Bluetooth-enabled earpiece that detects sounds and sends electrical impulses to an electrode-packed retainer. By pressing their tongue against the retainer, users feel a distinct pattern of electric impulses as a tingling or vibrating sensation.

The tongue contains thousands of nerves and the brain is able to decode complicated information from tongue sensations, according to the researchers.

Therefore, the patient’s brain will learn to interpret specific patterns as words through training, thus allowing him or her to “hear” through his or her mouth, they explained.

After filing a provisional patent for the technology, the scientists launched a study that aims to determine which parts of the tongue detect electrical impulses and whether those areas differ from person to person. In the study, participants place an array of electrodes in their mouth and report where they feel electrical impulses and how strong they are. If nerve patterns are found to be consistent, the mouthpiece could be standardised for all patients; it not, it will have to be customised for every patient, which is likely to affect cost.

The researchers believe that their invention could become a less invasive and cost-effective alternative to cochlear implants in the future.
On Saturday, 14 March, IDS Cologne will be hosting its first Career Day, offering information on topics such as education, career planning and job prospects in the dental profession. The initiative aims to enable companies to address pupils, trainees, students and other persons interested in a career in the dental industry. Career Day will take place at the Speakers’ Corner in Hall 3.1 and will include on-stage company presentations, as well as a Recruitment Lounge for personal meetings.

As part of its presentation at Career Day, Sirona will give two lectures, one at 10 a.m. in English titled “Global market leadership requires world class HR” and another one at 2 p.m. in German on the same topic. Moreover, Sirona will be represented at the Recruitment Lounge, offering information about the company’s international career prospects.

“Our employees are our innovation drivers—without them, our success would not be possible. Thus, we place a high value on a modern, open business culture, high responsibility and freedom of scope, as well as excellent career opportunities in the global context,” stated Michael Elling, Vice-President of Corporate Human Resources at Sirona.

According to a report published by the Institute of German Dentists, the costs for dentists establishing their own practice in Germany have increased significantly—approximately €427,000 in 2013, which are 5 per cent more than in the previous year. Sixty-eight per cent of dentists chose to take over an existing practice instead of establishing their own. The costs involved in take-over amounted to approximately €300,000.

“For medical care to continue at the current high level and to be comprehensive and offered close to the patient’s residence, we need enough dentists who take pleasure in their profession and practise it with commitment and are willing to take the risk of self-employment,” asserted Dr Wolfgang Eßer, head of the National Association of Statutory Health Insurance Dentists.

For Eßer, politics contribute to the uncertain future of young professionals in the country. According to him, there is no planning security owing to frequent government intervention. In addition, excessive administrative burdens take up time necessary for treatment. Furthermore, practices are placed under significant pressure caused by increasing competition and the economisation of health care.

Speaking about this process, Dr Jaime Edelson, chairperson of the FDI WOHD task team, commented: “Sugar reacts with bacteria in the mouth, which together form an acid that damages the enamel. When this keeps happening, a hole is formed in the tooth, which then requires filling and may over time lead to an extraction. By paying close attention to how often we are consuming sugary foods and drinks, the number of acid attacks on our teeth can be reduced.”

WOHD is an opportunity for the FDI to draw attention to proven oral care behaviours that people can adopt to protect their teeth—for life. These include brushing twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste, cutting down on consumption of sugary foods and drinks between meals, and chewing sugar-free gum after meals and snacks when on the go and brushing is not feasible.