



AUSTRALIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION INC.

PREVENTION – THE KEY

THE PROBLEM:

Demand for dental visits and the number of dental services per visit has increased substantially over the last 15 years. Between 1979 and 1995 demand increased by 50% and it is estimated that the demand for dental visits will increase from 23.8 million visits in 1995 to 33.2 million in 2010.¹

It is estimated that to maintain self sufficiency in its dental workforce, the number of Australian dental graduates of our dental schools would need to increase by 120 per year.² In the current educational climate this is not likely to be achieved until Governments focus attention on this workforce problem. The longer the delay in giving the issue attention the greater the problem will become. Therefore, attention must also be directed to the development and implementation of preventive and educative programs aimed at reducing the number of dental services required by the community.

The ADA believes increased investment in preventive programs would be a sound investment to reduce incidence of dental disease.

SOME RECOMMENED SOLUTIONS:

1. FLUORIDATION

There is universal agreement between all the major public health bodies throughout the world regarding the benefits of water fluoridation.

It has been found to be:

- **safe** to be used in the fight against dental infection
- **effective** in that it delivers proven decay reduction
- **efficient** in that it reaches a high proportion of targets
- **cost-effective** in that its benefits far outweigh the costs and
- **equitable** in that it transcends socio-economic barriers that prevent similar decay prevention by the use of other fluoride-containing products.

THE SCIENTIFIC OPINION ON FLUORIDATION

US CDC Oct 1999 ³	<i>"The safety and effectiveness of water fluoridation have been re-evaluated frequently, and no credible evidence supports an association between any of these conditions"...cancer, Down Syndrome, heart disease, osteoporosis and bone fracture, AIDS, low intelligence, Alzheimer disease, allergic reactions, and other health conditions."</i>
Commentary on the UK Government commissioned research by the York NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination 2002 ⁴	<i>"Worldwide, 39 million people consume naturally fluoridated water and a further 317 million consume water with added fluoride, many for 40 years or more. Any adverse health effects would by this time have emerged in the general population and have been reported and incorporated into the York review. The review can therefore be added to those others published over the past fifteen years that provide reassurance on the safety and efficacy of fluoridation programmes."</i>
US National Cancer Institute Oct 2000 quoting research from 1991 ⁵	<i>"...scientists at the National Cancer Institute evaluated the relationship between the fluoridation of drinking water and the number of deaths due to cancer in the US during a 36 year period, and the relationship between water fluoridation and the number of new cases of cancer during a 15 year period. After examining more than 2.2 million cancer deaths records and 125,000 cancer case records in countries using fluoridated water, the researchers concluded that there was no indication of increased cancer risk associated with fluoridated drinking water."</i>

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Health Canada⁶

"Health Canada endorses the fluoridation of drinking water to prevent tooth decay and has no warnings of any adverse effects other than skeletal fluorosis which it acknowledges may only occur at levels (which) are much higher than those to which the average Canadian is exposed daily, even with fluoridated drinking water."

The ADA supports the implementation of water fluoridation across Australia. It is aware from the Prime Minister's letter to the ADA Tasmania Branch in September 2003 that he and his Government are also supportive of the beneficial effects such programs have achieved.

The ADA therefore seeks Federal Government financial support for the promotion of the implementation of water fluoridation, Australia-wide, through a public education program including public water authorities.

2. ORAL HEALTH CAMPAIGNS

Each year the ADA undertakes a National public educational program. This year the ADA is planning to embark upon a program addressing oral health in a campaign "Beyond Teeth".

This program is designed to educate the public about a variety of issues, one of which will be Oral Cancer. This program will effectively 'dovetail' with the announcement by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Federal Minister for Health and Ageing who proposes graphic health warnings be placed on cigarette packaging pointing out the risks of oral cancer from use of tobacco products (see picture). The ADA welcomes this initiative.

The ADA, in its policy statement on tobacco, recognises that tobacco irrefutably contributes to a reduction in an individual's general oral and dental health. The statement identifies smoking as an aetiological factor in the development of oral cancer, leukoplakia and keratosis. It supports the continuation of public awareness campaigns on health issues related to tobacco products to alert the public of the potential dangers of the use of tobacco.

The ADA is limited in the resources it can use for such campaigns and believes that with Government assistance, the effectiveness of the ADA's programs



will be enhanced. Similar initiatives in the area of diet, lifestyle and basic oral hygiene techniques would also be worthwhile investments.

1. Spencer AJ, Teusner DN, Carter KD & Brennan DS 2003. The Dental Labour Force in Australia: The position and policy directions. AIHW cat. No. POH 2. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (Population Oral Health Series No. 2).
2. *ibid.*
3. MMWR Weekly October 22nd 1999 / 48(41);933-940 Accessed on 26.7.01 at www.cdc.gov/epo/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm4841
4. Lennon, M.A. (2000) Guest Leader: A systematic review of public water fluoridation – a commentary. Community Dental Health 17: No 3. p130-2
5. National Cancer Institute (2000) Accessed on 8.6.03 at http://cis.nci.nih.gov/fact/3_15.htm
6. Health Canada: Fluorides and Human Health Accessed on 8.6.03 at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/iyh/environment/fluorides.html> STRA

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