

# The Rickmansworth Dental Centre

## Newsletter



tel: 01923 777450

e-mail: [dentist@thedentalcentre.org](mailto:dentist@thedentalcentre.org)

Issue 64, Spring 2017

Welcome to the 64<sup>th</sup> Rickmansworth Dental Centre Newsletter. Thank you for your positive feedback on previous issues. If you have any comments on our newsletter or anything you would like to see in it, please let us know.

### Practice News

Welcome to our Spring 2017 Newsletter. We hope you are having a good Spring and not getting election fatigue.



This is a special Lupus Edition. Please see below for more information.

The good news is that our hygienist, Alicia has returned from her maternity leave. We are now also offering hygienist appointments on a Friday, with our new hygienist Asma. If you contact Pam on reception, she will be able to give you further information.

If you wish to book a session with the hygienist at the same time you have your routine visit with Adam, just let Pam know. There is information about hygienists and what they do on the back of this newsletter.

Remember, if there is anything you would like to see at the practice or if there is any way we can make your visit more pleasant, please let us know and we will try to oblige.

### Lupus Awareness Month



May is Lupus awareness month. Lupus is a really nasty disease that affects many millions worldwide and, as yet medical experts don't know what causes it and there is no known cure. Helping the fight against Lupus is a cause very close to Adam's heart. In July, Adam will be running the Virgin Sport Westminster 10k run on behalf of Lupus UK. Of course any donations would be hugely welcome (Just search for 'Deutsch' on Justgiving.com), but if you could spend a few minutes to find out a bit more about this horrible illness to raise awareness of it, Adam would be incredibly grateful.



### Friends and Family Test



As part of our NHS contractual obligations, when you receive care or treatment within the NHS, you will be asked to fill out a short questionnaire to give us feedback. The questionnaire simply asks if you would recommend The Dental Centre to your friends and family. This is already being done in other areas of the NHS in an attempt to improve the quality of services provided. This has been running since 1st April 2015 and the responses received so far have been extremely positive. We aim to keep up the high standards to which we aspire.

Our comments and suggestions box is still present in the waiting room and we welcome all patients to give feedback on their experience at The Dental Centre.

### How Times Have Changed...



An advert from the 1950's. Please note that as your dentist, Adam would not recommend Viceroy or any other brand of cigarette!

### Focus On Lupus

#### What is lupus?

Systemic Lupus Erythematosus is a disease where the immune system becomes overactive and starts making antibodies against its own cells and is therefore called an auto-immune disease. When the disease is active, immune responses can cause inflammation in cells which can then affect one or many tissues of the body: skin, joints, muscles, blood vessels, blood cells, brain and nerves, other organs such as lungs, heart, kidneys, gastrointestinal tract and/or the linings around internal organs. Patients have a variable course with the disease lasting many years in the majority.

#### Who gets lupus?

Lupus affects women nine times as often as men, usually occurring in women in the childbearing years. It can, however, occur in children or post-menopause. Afro-Caribbean and South Asian races are more likely to develop lupus.

#### How does lupus affect the body?

Lupus is a highly variable disease which may be affected by the interaction of genetic, environmental and hormonal factors. Potentially, it can affect any organ or tissue of the body. In any individual patient, however, only some organs may ever be affected; the tissues and systems involved and the intensity of involvement may vary with time. The disease is very much an individual illness differing from person to person.

#### What are the features of lupus?

Fatigue, joint and muscle pain and muscle weakness, flu-like illness, skin rashes (including the classical "butterfly" rash on the cheeks and nose), hair-loss and mouth ulcers are the most common symptoms. However internal organ involvement can include chest wall pain (pleurisy), kidney disease and brain inflammation. Some patients with lupus have a clotting tendency

and this can present, for instance, as a thrombosis (blood clot) in the vein or an artery.

#### How serious is lupus?

Lupus is different for each person. Many will experience a mild flare which could affect various joints, skin and cause fatigue. With time, treatment may help improve these symptoms and this is when the disease is said to be in remission. Some patients only experience one flare, however, others may experience periodic increased disease activity followed by periods of remission. While these milder flares often disrupt normal activities and patients may need to make certain adaptations to their lifestyle (to make life easier at these times) they do not cause a threat to internal organs. However, despite treatment some patients may still only feel some improvement and activity of the disease continues at a low level. For a smaller group of patients lupus is more serious and despite the use of various treatments the disease remains difficult to control. Major kidney, central nervous system or vascular involvement of the disease require a more intensive medical follow up and treatment, and can have a serious impact on patients' health. With new treatments and care pathways outcome results have improved.

#### How is lupus treated?

Symptom control is the goal for non-organ-threatening lupus (e.g. skin and joints) whereas organ preservation is the aim for organ threatening lupus (e.g. kidney). Medication - the type of medication is determined by the clinical manifestations and severity of symptoms. Patients may need to try various treatments before finding the one that is both effective in treating the symptoms but also has the fewest side-effects.

Anti-inflammatory agents are used for mild disease and painful symptoms - joints, muscle pain, pleurisy, headaches, etc. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories should be avoided in patients with kidney disease.

Hydroxychloroquine is a drug originally developed for malaria that also helps patients with lupus symptoms. It is a useful first line treatment in mild to moderate disease and can often control joint symptoms, pleurisy and skin involvement. Benefit usually occurs gradually over several months.

Steroids - Generally reserved for more serious manifestations of the disease (vasculitis, central nervous system, kidney, etc.). It is sometimes necessary to use steroids for non-organ threatening manifestations such as arthritis, pleurisy, but side effects are common and doses

are kept as low as possible and for as short a time as possible.

Immunosuppressive drugs - These are reserved for moderate to severe disease either not responsive to first line treatments or requiring prolonged use of unacceptably high doses of steroids. Examples include: Cyclophosphamide, Azathioprine, Mycophenolate Mofetil and Myfortic. Regular careful monitoring by the specialist centre and General Practitioner is required to identify any side-effects early before they become dangerous.

Biological agents - There are two biologic drugs used to treat lupus. Rituximab and Belimumab are newer therapies used to treat moderate to severe disease. Rituximab is selective because it works by targeting and depleting cells which play a role in autoantibody production. Belimumab is a monoclonal antibody which works by inhibiting B-Lymphocyte stimulator (BLyS) which stimulates antibody production.

Non-medication measures

- Planning restful periods during the day, pacing of daily activities with regular meal breaks, adequate sleep and the need to consider making further changes during time of flare.
- Minimising stress: by considering lifestyle modification that makes living with lupus more manageable. Developing good communication links and support from the medical team, family members and employer is helpful in keeping the disease under control. Regular gentle exercise also helps improve fatigue and reduce stress.
- Avoid provoking factors - minimise sun exposure and excessive heat and treat infections early. Non live vaccinations are reported as being safe and effective in lupus as benefits outweigh the risks. However, vaccines should be avoided when lupus disease is active.
- Patient awareness of early symptoms, which may signal a flare and prompt reporting of these to their physician allowing earlier treatment.
- Stop smoking as it reduces the effects of Hydroxychloroquine.
- Access to personalised treatment at expert clinics, specialising in lupus management.

**What is the outlook?**

In summary, SLE is a potentially serious disease, which can affect almost any system of the body. We do not yet know what causes it. The outlook for survival has improved in recent years and most patients with SLE will continue to have mild disease. If diagnosed early and treated appropriately at an early stage, lupus may settle and ultimately go into remission - i.e. the patient requires no, or minimal, medication. With good partnership, support and co-operation between the patient, family and doctor, the problems associated with the disease can be significantly modified.

## Visiting the Dental Hygienist

At The Dental Centre we have two dental hygienists. Alicia is here on Wednesdays and Asma is here on Mondays, Fridays and one Saturday morning a month (please contact the surgery for further details).

Listed below are a few of the most frequently asked questions about hygienists and what a visit to the hygienist involves.

**What is a hygienist?**

Dental hygienists are specially trained to work with the dentist in providing care tailored to the patients' needs.

They play an important role in dental health care and are mainly concerned with gum health, education in correct home care and the application of preventive materials to the teeth and gums.

The hygienist provides professional cleaning of the teeth for the patient. Most importantly they educate the patient in the best way to keep the teeth free of plaque.

**Why is this treatment important?**

Regular professional cleaning combined with your home care will help maintain a healthy mouth. A clean and healthy mouth will improve your appearance, help you keep your teeth and give you fresh breath.

**Can a hygienist help prevent dental disease?**

The training of the hygienist is centred on preventing dental disease. Carefully removing the deposits that build up on the teeth and teaching you how to prevent it reforming again, will go a long way to slowing the progress of gum disease. Anti-bacterial gels and solutions can be applied under the gum to kill the bacteria causing gum disease. By discussing your diet and recommending other preventive measures your decay rate can also be reduced.

Children can benefit from having their teeth polished. The hygienist can also apply fluoride gels and solutions to help prevent decay. The permanent back teeth can also benefit from having the fissures sealed.

**Why doesn't the dentist do this work?**

Dr. Deitsch can carry out this type of work. However, the hygienist has also been specially trained to carry out scaling and polishing and can spend longer with you. They are also expert at teaching you how to look after your teeth and gums. Often the hygienist will spend a number of appointments getting the gums healthy ready for the dentist to do the more complex treatment.

**Will the treatment hurt?**

Scaling and polishing is usually pain-free. However, if you do experience some discomfort the hygienist can eliminate this with the use of topical anaesthetic creams or by giving you some local anaesthetic. It is important that you let the hygienist know at the time so that some pain control can be given.

**What can I do to help the Hygienist?**

You can do a great deal to help yourself and the hygienist as you are in control of your mouth between visits to the practice.

The hygienist will have shown you how to remove plaque with a toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste. You will also have been shown how to clean between your teeth with floss, tape or little brushes. There are many products now available and the hygienist will recommend those that are appropriate for you.

**Do I need to see the hygienist?**

Following your routine examination Dr. Deitsch will advise you if you require a visit to the hygienist. If you feel you wish to see the hygienist anyway, please contact the surgery and this can be arranged for you.

If you have any queries or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.