

MEDIA RELEASE

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What are you doing for Mouth Cancer Awareness Week 2004?

Dr Vinod Joshi started this year's campaign by launching the Mouth Cancer Foundation, a professional support organization dedicated to helping people with mouth, throat and other head & neck cancers, at the BDTA Dental Showcase held last week at Excel, London. 5,000 helium-filled balloons were released to the London skies at 5pm on Saturday 16th October 2004. The tagged balloons are carrying the **Mouth Cancer Awareness Week** message as far across Europe as possible. The ticket holder whose balloon travels furthest by Mouth Cancer Awareness Week will win a Philips 28" widescreen television. Philips Oral Healthcare also donated £3,000 to the Mouth Cancer Foundation.

The Mouth Cancer Foundation (MCF) aims to increase mouth cancer awareness amongst the public and also provide support to those suffering from mouth, throat and other head & neck cancers. It has a comprehensive website www.mouthcancerfoundation.org with an online support group that

has over 420 forum members. MCF plans to ensure that people with these cancers have access to individual counseling, an online support group and help in obtaining financial assistance. It has plans to reach out to local communities, hospitals, and support groups with vital information and expertise.

Mouth cancers have a higher proportion of deaths per number of cases than breast cancer, cervical cancer or skin melanoma. In the UK, there has been a 19% increase in cases from 3,673 in 1995 to 4,374 in 2000 and 13,000 people in the UK are currently living in the shadow of this debilitating disease. The mortality rate from mouth cancer is just over 50% due to late detection. Despite treatment, there were 1,703 deaths in 2002 – that’s approximately one death every 5 hours. The chances of survival are much improved if the cancer is detected early and rapidly treated.

Dr Vinod Joshi said, “It is important for dentists to educate patients to become self-aware because they may not have another mouth cancer screening until their next dental appointment, which could be in six or more months time! The Mouth Cancer Foundation web site has information for the public on what to look out for in between appointments. Life-style habits are important but self-awareness is the key to early detection!”

Do your bit for Mouth Cancer Awareness this year by joining in the campaign. Advise your patients to quit smoking, drink sensibly and eat healthily to reduce their chances of developing mouth cancer. In addition, if

they have a mouth ulcer, which lasts for more than 3 weeks, they should see a dentist immediately. Dentists are ideally placed to screen patients. A recent BDA survey showed that 84% of dentists currently screen all patients regularly. The BDA have produced a booklet on mouth cancer screening which can be downloaded from the BDA website www.bda.org.

Mouth Cancer Awareness Week will take place from 7th-13th November 2004 and it's not too late to get involved! Information packs can be obtained from the British Dental Healthcare Foundation - online at www.dentalhealth.org.uk or by ringing 0870 770 4014. The pack includes an Information Guide for Health Professionals and an order form for Mouth Cancer leaflets and blue ribbons. Denplan offer a FREE eye-catching poster. Promote Mouth Cancer Awareness this year by wearing a blue ribbon.

More information about **Mouth Cancer Awareness Week** is available at the Mouth Cancer Foundation web site www.mouthcancerfoundation.org or by contacting info@mouthcancerfoundation.org

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