

Study links Dental X-Rays to Cancer

by Adam Cresswell via stan - The Australian *Tuesday, Apr 10 2012, 10:12pm*

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Most dentists are trigger-happy when it comes to dental X-Rays, yet most common dental work does not require X-Rays, simple probes and mirrors are sufficient exploratory devices. However, dentists in their frantic pursuit of huge fees and quicker client turnover avail themselves of the easier, higher paying procedure and to hell with possible brain tumors, after all its YOU not me receiving the deadly radiation!



Perhaps now the public and regulatory authorities will focus on the outrageous, usually unjustified, fees dentists charge. Bright young school leavers are now choosing dentistry over medicine due to the ease of work and the huge fees they are able to 'extract' for relatively simple procedures. A review and much needed reforms are urgently required; also the number of incompetent dentists that create more problems than they fix has increased dramatically.

Report follows:

PATIENTS who frequently have X-ray examinations of their teeth may be at increased risk of developing brain cancer, prompting calls for dentists to avoid unnecessary overuse of the scans.

US researchers who conducted the largest study of its type into the links between dental X-rays and cancer found people with meningioma were more than twice as likely to report having had a type of X-ray called a bitewing, in which an X-ray film encased in a T-shaped plastic sleeve is held inside the cheek while the patient bites on the stem of the T.

Children under 10 were found to have a 40 per cent increased risk of meningioma if they had had a bitewing yearly or more often, while adults aged 20-49 had a 60 per cent increased risk for bitewings less than annually, and a 90 per cent increased risk if done more frequently.

A second type of oral X-ray called a panorex, referred to in Australia as an orthopantogram, was linked to a nearly five-fold increased risk of meningioma for children aged under 10 at the time of the scan, although this finding was based on small

case numbers.

The authors of the study, published yesterday in the journal *Cancer*, said the findings were important because dental X-rays remained the most common artificial source of exposure to ionising radiation for US residents. "Although dental X-rays are an important tool in well-selected patients, efforts to moderate exposure to ionising radiation to the head is likely to be of benefit to patients and healthcare providers alike," wrote the authors from the Yale University School of Medicine and the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. The researchers asked more than 1400 meningioma patients to describe what sort of dental X-rays, if any, they had received, and how often. They compared the data with information from a separate group of 1350 cancer-free patients.

But Cancer Council Australia spokesman Terry Slevin said the patients' recollections were unlikely to be wholly accurate, and that those without cancer were unlikely to be as thorough in searching their memories for tests they thought might be to blame for a health condition. "The study doesn't prove causality -- what it does is put forward a reasonable hypothesis that this exposure may contribute to an increased risk of this cancer," Mr Slevin said.

Brisbane dentist Derek Lewis, a member of the Australian Dental Association's oral health committee, said digital techniques had reduced radiation doses dramatically over the past 10 years. "Two dental X-rays is the equivalent of about eight hours' of background radiation, whereas flying to London is about 12 days' of radiation," Dr Lewis said.

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