

# A week in Cape Town with the Dental Wellness Trust

**Harriet Wright** reports back from Cape Town, where she witnessed first-hand the work of the Dental Wellness Trust, and helped initiate the Wellflair fluoride varnish study

The Dental Wellness Trust (DWT) aims to promote good oral health through education programmes and has the philosophy: 'A clean tooth cannot be diseased'. The DWT was founded in 2011 by Dr Linda Greenwall, a South African prosthodontist based in London and editor-in-chief of this journal. The charity now supports numerous oral health programmes in the UK, South Africa and other destinations around the work.

The prevalence of caries among children six years of age in the Western Cape is 82.3% (Department of Health, 2003). The DWT introduced the Livesmart programme in 2011, which teaches children how to wash their hands, brush their teeth and the importance of a healthy diet.

Over 10,000 children in Mfuleni and Khayelitsha, Cape Town, now participate in the programme, which is run by locally trained volunteers, including teachers, children and 'mamas', who manage the after-school programmes also. The Livesmart programme is now being introduced in a primary school in Luton, England, with plans for other schools in the area to participate in the programme.

### Wellflair fluoride varnish study

The DWT has been working with DMG and the University of Western Cape (UWC)

#### BIOGRAPHY



**Harriet Wright** is a dental foundation trainee on the North Central London scheme and works in a practice in north London. After completing her BSc (Hons) at the University

of Manchester, Hattie went on to study dentistry at King's College London, where she graduated in July 2017. Hattie started working for the Dental Wellness Trust (DWT) in 2016 and travelled to Cape Town to complete a project with DWT for her elective. She has just completed the London Marathon and raised over £3,600 for the DWT.



to commence a fluoride varnish study, Wellflair. Five dentists from the UK, South Africa and Germany (Linda Greenwall, Neil Myburg, Michael Orlans, Michael Wicht, and Hattie Wright) and DMG research team (Susanne Effenberger and Marcus Cebula) travelled to Cape Town in February to commence the study.

The aim of the study is to measure the effect of fluoride varnish over a 24-month period. Consent had been gained from all participants prior to starting. Three-hundred children from reception and year one classes participated in the Livesmart programme and were screened by five dentists over three days.

The screening assessed for dental decay and was recorded using the decayed (D/d), missing (M/m), and filled (F/f) surface index (DMFS for permanent teeth or D3MFS for deciduous teeth).

The children were assigned to two groups: group A – participation in Livesmart tooth brushing programme and fluoride varnish (Flaïresse) applied; and group B – participation in Livesmart tooth brushing programme only.



For group A, the teeth were dried and 0.4ml Flaïresse varnish was applied to the teeth and flossed between each tooth. The children in group B will continue to participate in the Livesmart toothbrushing programme using toothpaste with 1,450ppm fluoride.

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**'The Livesmart mamas were trained to assist with recording the DMFS/ D3MFS and apply fluoride varnish and floss through each tooth contact'**



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D3MFS and apply fluoride varnish and floss through each tooth contact. All 300 children will be screened every six months for a 24-month period to determine if there is a change in the DFMS/ D3MFS score. The team are looking forward to going back to Cape Town for the next stage of the study.

## Oral health education

Sunday 18 February was a busy day for the DWT with a conference for the Livesmart supervisors, followed by a concert and party for the children participating in the programme. The conference took place at Melomed Hospital, UWC Dental School,

and included oral health and brushing training for our new group of dedicated, Livesmart volunteers.

Each supervisor was given a manual, which explained how to construct a toothbrush board, brushing songs, consent forms for parents to complete and posters with brushing and hand washing diagrams. The singing Prof, Professor Myburg, kicked off the conference with his song, *Healthy mouth and happy smiles*, a story of diet, dirt and fluoride. Who says brushing can't be fun?

This was followed by Elna van Der Ham, an oral hygienist and Itop trainer, who explained how plaque forms and the

importance of effective toothbrushing, and how this can be achieved.

Alice Grasveld, oral hygienist and anthropologist, with Dieketso, our experienced Livesmart supervisor, demonstrated on models all sites of the mouth that need to be brushed. Dieketso demonstrated applying toothpaste around a plate to ensure the toothpaste and brush are not contaminated or wasted and also hand washing technique.

Due to the severe drought in Cape Town, children are using hand sanitiser to wash their hands to save water. Everyone was then given a brush and all brushed together. The conference closed with dancing and everyone singing the DWT song, *Brighten the corner where you are*.

Two-hundred-and-fifty children from the Livesmart programme performed in their brushing groups with brilliant songs and choreographed routines. We then held a party to thank the children for their dedication in attending every evening to wash their hands and brush their teeth. A fantastic end to a hugely inspiring week.

*More information on the Wellflair study ('Caries prophylaxis with Flairesse fluoride varnish') can be found by visiting [bit.ly/2KrMI0e](http://bit.ly/2KrMI0e).*

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## Reference

Department of Health (2003) *Report: national children's oral health survey South Africa 1999-2002*