

23.07 2021

### **Freedom from dental decay: a human right of all UK children?**

Children suffering from the blight of dental decay caused by processed foods over-laden with sugar need protecting says Professor Amandine Garde, the founding director of the Law & Non-Communicable Diseases Research Unit at the University of Liverpool.

A leading expert on the role that the law can have on promoting better health, Professor Garde is a speaker in the first session of BSPD's Conference (1) on 5 October when she will explain why she advocates for a child rights-based approach to the prevention of non-communicable diseases.

Also on the panel dedicated to discussing policies for reducing sugar consumption are Dr Emma Boyland, an Experimental Psychologist, based at the University of Liverpool, and Dr Alison Tedstone, Chief Nutritionist at Public Health England. The session will be chaired by Dr Clare Ledingham who also chairs the conference hosted this year by BSPD's Merseyside branch.

Professor Garde will promote a rights-based approach supporting population-wide, preventive measures as the most likely to ensure that the UK government and others around the world comply with their obligation to protect the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and related children's rights.

In particular, she will argue that governments are legally accountable for their failure to protect children from the damage that excessive sugar consumption causes and will reflect on the regulatory tools that public health campaigners have at their disposal to increase the pressure on the government to promote better health, and therefore reduce health inequities and improve compliance with children's rights. She will frame the discussion in a post-Brexit context, highlighting that trade negotiations should bear in mind the imperative for governments to protect public health.

Professor Graham McGregor, Chairman of Action on Sugar, who with Professor Garde was at the 2018 Sugar Summit organised by the BDA, said a legal or regulatory approach was probably one of the most effective ways to bring about change.

Just recently there had been a flurry of promising new policies for improving the British diet, he said, but unless targets for sugar reduction were enforced there would be little improvement. "The food manufacturers are completely in charge of what goes into their products and will not change unless mandatory targets for sugar reduction are imposed."

Other speakers lined up for the virtual 2021 conference by Scientific Chair Laura Gartshore include:

- Dr Charlotte Waite, the community dentist and Charlotte Waite, a social worker who will discuss: Advocating for Vulnerable Children and their Oral Health
- Dr Aideen Naughton: Childhood adversity brain development and life course legacy.
- Dr Hannah Barham Brown, a GP and disability campaigner: Issues with my tissues and contending with Ehlers Danlos Syndrome
- Dr Lola Solebo, a Consultant Ophthalmologist: Through the eyes of a child.
- Professor Julian Pine: How parents influence their children's language development
- Dr Sally Hibbert on transitional care.

The two day conference on 5 and 6 October will be preceded by the BSPD Teachers Branch Study morning on 4 October.

### **Reference**

1) <https://bspdconference.org.uk/bspd-2021-scientific-programme/>

### **Note to Editors**

1) The BSPD conference Sugar Summit is inspired by a British Dental Association event in 2018 attended by many experts and speakers on health and nutrition. More here: <https://www.nature.com/articles/sj.bdj.2018.1124>

BSPD position statements on advertising of foods high in fat sugar and salt as well as on dental caries and obesity can be found here: <https://www.bspd.co.uk/Professionals/Resources/Position-Statements>.