

Osteoporosis detectable with dental software

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The University of Manchester is to commercialise a new piece of software, developed by its academics, that can detect osteoporosis via routine dental x-rays, having agreed a deal with a Swedish firm to sell the solution.

The specialist software, Osteodent, has secured a deal with Swedish company Crebone AB for the rights to sell the software until 2010.

Osteodent is designed to increase the detection rates of osteoporosis, which can be treated effectively if identified early. It was developed by The University of Manchester's Dr Hugh Devlin, Dr Jim Graham, Dr Danny Allen and Professor Keith Horner.

The university received a €1.4m grant in 2003 to conduct a study of 670 women's X-rays in the UK, Sweden, Belgium and Greece.

The results of the recently published study showed that Osteodent is considered the most accurate method for identifying individuals with osteoporosis using dental X-rays and clinical markers.

Professor of oral and maxillofacial imaging, Keith Horner, said: "Currently it tends to be only 'the worried well' or those with well-informed GPs whose osteoporosis risk is properly assessed. Osteodent will open up the opportunity of being tested to millions of women who attend a dentist and would otherwise not be tested."

The university now has two patents on the software, one for North America and one for the rest of the world.

Professor Horner added: "We're very excited about this product because we know it has enormous potential. As Osteodent works as part of a routine dental appointment it could have substantial benefits for our NHS financially. In countries with private healthcare systems, Osteodent could also be very lucrative to dentists."

Currently, most women with osteoporosis don't realise they have the condition until late in the disease when they suffer a bone fracture of the spine, hip or wrist.

In the UK alone, there are an estimated 3.5m suitable dental X-ray examinations carried out each year.

Since the results of the European study were announced there has been a high level of interest in the product. German dental company, KaVo, is currently undertaking an audit project using Osteodent software, that is aimed at improving dentists diagnostic abilities.

Professor Stuart White, chair of oral and maxillofacial radiology at UCLA school of dentistry in the USA commented: "Osteoporosis affects millions of aging men and women worldwide.

Since a large fraction of adults seek dental care annually, Osteodent offers the opportunity to screen many individuals for early signs of osteoporosis. This is a truly exciting development."

Link

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