

A system of dental age estimation for children and young adults.

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ORAL PRESENTATION

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 J Forensic Odontostomatol
 2017 Nov 1; Supp1(35): 49 - 50
 ISSN :2219-6749

ABSTRACT

Introduction

The need for Age Estimation in the Living continues with the arrival of many children in the UK from countries outside Europe. There are a number of methods of estimating age in such children but until recently these were not acceptable to the Immigration Court in England. Entangled with this issue is the perception that many of the subjects applying for status as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) have an adult appearance. The reason for this is Child Status carries the right to remain in the UK and to receive family support, education, and medical care.

Background to the Legal Process

Over the last 15 years the main agency for estimating the age of UASC, and by extension adult looking individuals claiming to be children are staff of the Social Service Departments of Local Government.

This followed a Judicial Review, generally known as *A v Croydon* 2009. This led to the adoption of a specific method of age assessment based on a Holistic Approach. Dental Age Estimation (DAE) whilst not completely excluded was considered 'too draconian' to require a UASC to submit to this process. In addition the Social Workers Age Assessment was considered to be more accurate than DAE

Procedures Used for Dental Age Estimation in the Living

The basis for DAE is

1. A Clinical History and Oro-Dental Examination
2. A Dental Panoramic Tomograph (DPT)

Once the radiographic image is available, a preliminary determination of the subsequent course of investigation is made. If the 3rd molars have not completed growth (ie Demirjian stage G or less) then the Simple Average Method (SAM) is used.

If the 3rd molar has completed growth (Demirjian Stage H) then the Threshold Assignment Method (TAM) is used.

The recent Judicial Review in the Asylum Court (October 2016 JR/3413/2016\UTIAC) led to a number of important decisions.

Legally Acceptable Procedures for Dental Age Estimation are

1. The Simple Average Method using Percentile Data resulting in an average age define by the Median (50th %ile) and the Interquartile Range (IQR). This can be derived by looking up the data in www.dentalage.co.uk/+R/RDS
2. The presence of stage H alone is not sufficient evidence to determine whether or not a subject is over 18 years of age. The court regarded this as a meaningless assessment.
3. The use of Mandibular Maturity Markers (MMM) comprising Root Canal Width (RCW), Root Pulp Visibility(RPV) and Periodontal Ligament Visibility whilst clearly alluded to suffered because 'None of the Mandibular Maturity Markers described in this judgement has yet been sufficiently examined to enable it safely to be said that it is diagnostic of age.'

Conclusions

The use of The Simple Average Method (SAM) for children, and the Threshold Assignment Method (TAM) for young adults provides Age Estimates that are potentially acceptable to The Immigration Courts in the UK.