

## A case of too many dentists

The problem of an over-supply of dentists, which is likely to occur when new graduates go into service next year, could be solved by a careful review of the dental profession, Dr Chau Kai-king said yesterday.

Chau, president of the Hongkong Dental Association, said if the public were educated about regular visits to dentists, there would not be an excess.

At the opening ceremony of the Eleventh Asian Pacific Dental Congress on Monday, he will urge the government to carry out a review of the utilisation of dentists and devise a long term plan for the profession.

Some 1,500 delegates from more than 32 countries will attend the congress, to be held from November 5 to 11.

Six main speakers, including two local professionals, and more than 100 other speakers, will deliver papers on the theme of "Recent advances in the prevention and treatment of dental disease".

Chau said in Hongkong, the incidence of dental caries has decreased significantly over the last 10 years, due to the effects of fluoride supplements.

He said we have already met the standard declared in the Federation Dentaire Internationale in 1981, which was aimed at ensuring that children under 12 had less than three bad teeth — including those filled, loose or lost — by the year 2000.

However, periodontal disease, a major cause of tooth loss in adults, is still

prevalent, and it is estimated that more than 90 per cent of the population is affected.

A survey has been conducted by dental undergraduates to see how many people, out of a sample of about 1,500, are suffering from the disease, and discover the distribution of the various degrees of seriousness.

Results of the survey will be released for analysis in Hongkong and at international congresses early next year.

Chau said prevention can be simple, by brushing teeth properly after meals and seeing the dentist regularly to prevent the accumulation of dirt which causes the disease.

During the congress, a trade exhibition of the latest equipment will also be held.

Advanced equipment which uses ultrasonic prophylaxis to clean teeth, cold laser to treat oral diseases and light and durable material to fill cavities will be displayed.