The Mouth Cancer Foundation is calling for more to be done to raise awareness of mouth cancer, after a survey revealed many Britons are unaware of the risk factors.

A new European wide survey at the International Conference on Innovative Approaches in Head & Neck Oncology (ICHNO), found the UK lags behind Europe in its awareness of one of the world’s most common cancers.

The About Face survey investigating public awareness of mouth cancer also known as head and neck cancer, commissioned by Merck Serono and the European Head and Neck Cancer Society (EHNHS), found that although nearly nine in ten in the UK consider smoking to be a major risk factor, only one in two are aware that alcohol is a risk factor of mouth cancer and only one in seven are aware that HPV is a risk factor.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is the name for a common group of viruses. There are over 100 different types of HPV which affect the skin and the mucosa (the moist membranes that line parts of the body, such as the inside the mouth, throat, cervix and anus).

Some types of HPV are known to increase the risk of developing particular types of cancer and are known as high-risk HPVs. Over 10 different types of high-risk HPV can be passed from one person to another. HPV is spread through skin contact, often during sex.

Founder of the Mouth Cancer Foundation, Dr Vinod Joshi said: “If prevention is to be successful, awareness of these risk factors needs to be much higher. Much more still needs to be done to educate the public about mouth cancer.”

The survey also revealed that about nine in ten people have had no contact with a patient and so remain unaware of its debilitating effects.

While the survey showed that people in the UK were generally more aware of the symptoms of mouth cancer than those in the other European countries, it found that more needs to be done if we are to treat the disease earlier and reduce morbidity.

Cancer can occur in any part of the mouth, tongue, lips, throat, salivary glands, pharynx, larynx, sinuses, and other sites located in the head and neck area.

In its very early stages, mouth cancer can be almost invisible making it easy to ignore. Every three hours, someone in the UK will die from mouth cancer and the disease kills one in two people diagnosed due to late detection.

Mouth cancer awareness alert

The Mouth Cancer Foundation is seeking to remain at the forefront of growing numbers of people using SMS for tickets to Showcase again this year. We are pleased to offer potential visitors the chance to register by SMS for tickets to Showcase again this year. We recognise that a growing number of people choose to communicate this way and we want to make registration as easy as possible for all members of the dental team.’

Members of the dental team wishing to reserve tickets by SMS simply need to text their name, address and occupation and General Dental Council (GDC) number to: 07786 206 276.

For more information and to book a place, visit www.bacd.com. Those who book now can take advantage of a special 10 per cent discounted rate.