As part of this year's National Smile Month – an event that will run simultaneously in the UK and the USA – The British Dental Health Foundation will take a holistic approach to health, by focusing on promoting the link between oral health and overall body health.

From May 18 to June 17 this year, health professionals are being urged to use the “Brush for Health” tagline to educate members of the public on the often-underestimated importance of good oral healthcare to general wellbeing.

Dr Nigel Carter, chief executive of the Foundation, said: "This year’s campaign represents a real step forward for National Smile Month. There is a growing body of evidence suggesting that people with gum disease are more at risk of heart disease, heart attacks, strokes, diabetes and, in the case of pregnant women, giving birth to underweight babies.

'Ve need dentists and other health professionals to make the public aware of the importance of good oral healthcare to keeping gum disease under control and preventing it from developing into more serious general health conditions,' he said.

The USA-based campaign is being launched by the international arm of the Foundation in conjunction with US-equivalent dental charity, Oral Health America.

Dr Carter continued: 'Oral Health America (OHA) is the nation’s premier, independent advice organisation. Like the British Dental Health Foundation for people in the UK, OHA is dedicated to improving oral health for all Americans. We are delighted to be working with them to raise awareness of the link between oral health and overall body health on an even wider scale.'

Robert Klaus, president and chief executive of Oral Health America, said: 'We could not be more thrilled to be working with our colleagues at the British Dental Health Foundation to bring National Smile Month to the United States.

'Our two organisations share many similarities, and most importantly, a mission to raise public awareness of oral health's importance to overall health. America's understanding of oral health issues has grown considerably over the past two decades, and this is the right time to launch a campaign encouraging consumers and their care providers to take action.'

For more information on National Smile Month, visit www.nationalsmilemonth.org.

Dental practices interested in getting involved in National Smile Month can order a free campaign handbook by calling 0870 770 4000 or emailing pr@dentalhealth.org.