Oral Health Month
Oral health initiative signs up more than 85 per cent of practices - are you taking part?

The average income for a dentist in England and Wales is just over £289,000, according to recent figures from the NHS Information Centre. This is still considerably below the £107,000 that the average GP earns. However the figures revealed that for some dentists, earnings can be much higher with one in 20 dentists earning more than £200,000 between 2007 and 2008 and nearly 400 earning more than £700,000.

The NHS Information Centre statistics revealed that 982 dentists - nearly two per cent of the total - earned more than £500,000 in the year.

The figures cover earnings in the second year of dentists working under the new NHS contract introduced in 2006. The earnings cover both their NHS and private work.

Dentists running their own practices, who had a contract with the local primary care organisation, to provide NHS services earned an average £126,807.

But dentists working in a practice without such a contract earned on average £65,697.

The NHS Information Centre's chief executive Tim Straughan said: "The England and Wales report looks at earnings in the second year of the new contractual system and reveals the average earnings of NHS dentists varies greatly depending on whether they personally hold a contract with their Primary Care organisation."

John Milne, chair of the British Dental Association's (BDA's) General Dental Practice Committee, said: "These statistics reflect the second year of operation of the 2006 dental contract in England and Wales, a time when dentists were working hard to overcome problems with the new arrangements and make them work for their patients."

"Many practitioners were contending with the uncertainty of potential clawback of their contract values, Dentists, almost uniquely in the NHS, carry the business risk of their surgeries and are responsible for providing premises, equipment and staff."

"The picture the statistics paint is one of earnings settling and the expenses of NHS practitioners rising slightly."

He added: "What's important now is that we look forward to what we hope will be a better future for NHS dentistry in which the reforms recommended by Professor Steele's report are properly consulted on, meaningfully piloted and implemented for the good of patients and dentists alike."

Health Minister Ann Keen claimed the report confirmed "that NHS dentists have good levels of earnings."

She said: "Access to NHS dentistry is continuing to improve, following record investment, an expanding workforce and a constant increase in the amount of services being bought by the NHS."

One of the reasons it is thought that dentists are seeing their earnings grow is that they are taking on more private work and diversifying into cosmetic dentistry. This is a growth industry with the number of people seeking cosmetic treatments for their teeth increasing up to 40 per cent per year, according to the British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (BACD).

The richest dentist in Britain is thought to be James Hull, who opened his first surgery in 1987 in Newport, Wales and now has 48 dental practices in the UK, most of which specialise in cosmetic dentistry. The chain has become a leader in cosmetic dentistry, which includes teeth whitening, veneers and implants. It has also expanded into osteopathy, chiropody and Botox treatments.

Earlier this year, the dental chain was valued at £25m when it looked at selling a 50 per cent stake in the business to a private equity firm, in order to expand into continental Europe and the Middle East.

The Sunday Times Rich List claims Dr Hull is personally worth about £54m and said he has a $6m collection of vintage Jaguars.

Dentists still 'poor relation' to GPs

Chewing paan
Bangladeshi people in the UK could be at a higher risk of getting oral cancer due to their liking for chewing paan, a mixture of tobacco and areca nut, according to research. The habit of chewing paan may have led to an 'alarming' rise in the number of cases of oral cancer in East London, according to researchers at Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry. A team from the Centre for Clinical and Diagnostic Oral Science has used a mobile dental unit to tour areas of East London, targeting the Bangladeshi community, especially those who rarely visited a dentist.

Oral cancer
Oral cancer rates for both men and women of all ages, have increased by more than 45 per cent since records began in 1975, according to Cancer Research UK. The charity revealed that oral cancer rates in the UK for men in their 40s have gone up by 28 per cent since the mid 1990s, and rates for women in their 40s have increased by 24 per cent in the same period.

Hypnotist hired
A dentist in Scotland has hired a hypnotist to help patients overcome their fear of dentists. Patients at the Edinburgh-based Lubiju can now opt to have treatment under hypnosis instead of having the traditional needles. Dentist Dr Juju Krishman said: "What the hypnototherapy offers is that it puts the person back in control of those fears, it lets them feel that they are in a safe place and in control.'