Mary Harrison, 72, from Whickham near Newcastle, is the winner of the 2008 Schottlander, Smile of the Year, competition for the denture wearer with the best smile in Britain.

Mary, who has worn dentures since she was 29, dazzled the judges with her radiant smile and won an Italian holiday.

She said: 'I had trouble with one tooth and my husband said to take the lot out. Times have changed, but a lot of people did that in those days.'

Mary has a real zest for life and keeps fit by going dancing and working out at the gym three times a week. 'I'm a very friendly happy person,' she said. 'People always compliment my smile and say my teeth look great.'

Schottlander launched the Smile of the Year campaign to recognise the millions of people of all ages in the UK who wear dentures and look good.

Dentures are worn by more than 11 million people in the UK, of which one million wearers are people between 16 and 44. Last year alone, the NHS in England and Wales provided dentures for more than 10,000 children and young people aged between six and 24, according to the Dental Practice Board.

Dr Brian Schottlander, whose company makes the award-winning denture systems, said: 'Today, with advances in technology, dentures can look so realistic and natural that they are indistinguishable from real teeth.'

Schottlander won the Queen's Award for Innovation for its Enigma & Natura range of teeth and denture systems.}

We want dentists not fluoride

Councillors in Rossendale would rather see cash spent on another NHS dentist for the borough, than on the fluoridation of water by North West Primary Care Trust (PCT).

The cabinet debated the subject after they heard a talk on fluoridation by a consultant in dental public health and now must decide whether they want a consultation period to consider water fluoridation as a method of reducing tooth decay.

The general consensus was a lot of money would be needed for fluoridation which would be better spent on improving dental services. The public also need to be educated to take responsibility for their own teeth.

Nearly 50 per cent of five year old children in Rossendale have one or more decayed, missing or filled teeth and it is claimed that fluoride reduces the loss of minerals from tooth surfaces and makes teeth more resistant.

However, councillors are of the opinion that the money should instead be used to fund another NHS dentist for Rossendale, of which there are currently only five.

Coun Darryl Smith said: 'I am pleased we are being consulted about this, but I think it's completely pointless. Adding fluoride to water is an example of extracting away responsibility from people. For me it's like taking a sledge-hammer to cracking nuts - if I had a headache, I wouldn't expect everyone else to take an aspirin.'

The PCT board now has to decide if it wants to request the Strategic Health Authority to look at the possibility of fluoridating public water supplies by October 31.
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