

Manchester Evening New 29th March 2004

BUSINESSMAN Stephen Hayes thought he could lose his teeth because the expensive dental treatment he needed was not available on the NHS.

But the Cheshire entrepreneur had all the work done - and saved £17,000 into the bargain - by flying to Hungary for a "dental tour holiday".

Mr Hayes, 62, required a long course of treatment to repair his teeth, including gum surgery, [implants, bridges and crowns](#).

The work is not available on the NHS, and a private dentist in south Manchester told him the cost would be £25,000.

But after some research, he discovered a dental surgery in the Hungarian capital Budapest , 1,500 miles away, willing to do all of the work for a third of the price. Even with the cost of flights, hotels and additional treatment, he ended up saving thousands.

Mr Hayes' [Hungarian dentist](#) Attila Knott - nicknamed "Attila the Gum" - said he was able to keep the price down because the surgery was so busy.

He said: "We have three dentists, six technicians, an oral surgeon and three dental hygienists, so there is no waiting list. "Many customers want excellent service, but dentists are so expensive in the UK that they come here for the same service, but it is cheaper."

Mr Hayes is among a growing number of dental patients forced abroad for treatment because of the lack of NHS dentists - and high cost of private dentistry in Britain.

The problem was highlighted last month when more than 3,000 people applied to join a new NHS dentist opening in Scarborough , North Yorkshire.

More than 300 patients queued for hours on the first day of registration.

Mr Hayes first realised there was something wrong with his teeth when his gums started bleeding - one of the main warning signs for gum disease. His local dentist said there was nothing he could do about his gingivitis, but when it developed into periodontitis - a deterioration of the membranes holding the teeth in the bone - Mr Hayes sought a second opinion.

He was told by a top dentist in south Manchester he would have to pay to have his gums cleaned, which would be done by another dentist, and then he would need five teeth implants - at £2,000 a piece.

On top of the implant costs, he had to pay for gum surgery, crowns, bridges and numerous appointments and check-ups - bringing the total bill to around £25,000.

Then Mr Hayes spotted an advert in Saga magazine for dental treatment holidays costing just £540 an implant and jumped at the chance.

A week later he was on a £168 flight to [Budapest for a consultation](#), when the surgeon confirmed his extensive treatment would cost only £8,000