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BEAT THE BLUES

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£12,000 TO FIX MY TEETH IN HUNGARY

BY AIMI MOORES

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A MOTHER who became a recluse when she lost most of her teeth travelled to Hungary to have dental treatment she could not get on the NHS.

Louise Webb, aged 42, paid £12,000 for teeth implant treatment at a clinic in Budapest.

The mother-of-two was so depressed by the loss of her teeth she gave up her job and would not go out of the house.

She started experiencing dental problems four years ago, when a hereditary gum problem meant she developed abscesses in her mouth and her teeth started to rot.

Over the past four years she has had to have most of her teeth removed.

After she was told her dentist in Derby could do no more for her she was referred to the Birmingham Dental Hospital, where she was told the only option available to her on the NHS was dentures.

After looking into the possibility of getting tooth implants at a private dentist she was horrified to discover the treatment she needed would cost up to £60,000.

She spent hours on the internet desperately seeking a solution before contacting a company called Smile

Louise couldn't get treatment on NHS

Savers Hungary, which arranges for people to have dental surgery at a clinic in Budapest.

After paying just less than £12,000 and three trips to the Hungarian capital, she now has a full set of teeth - consisting of 13 implants and nine crowns - and the treatment has changed her life.

Mrs Webb, of Mere Side Close, Etruria, said: "I was in a lot of pain. My face had sunken in at the sides because I didn't have my back teeth and I became obsessed with it.

"I was a shop assistant but I had to give up my job because I didn't want to go out. I didn't want anyone to see me.

"I couldn't face having false teeth at my age. I just broke down and cried.

"I felt let down by the NHS because it's a hereditary condition - it's not my fault my teeth are like this and I pay my tax and national insurance like everyone else."

Mrs Webb believes she had no other choice than to go abroad for treatment.

"I could never afford implants here. I managed to get them done in Budapest for just under £12,000 and it was the most amazing place.

"There were so many

people there from the UK who couldn't afford treatment here, or didn't even have an NHS dentist. I don't know why it is so expensive here."

Mrs Webb's husband Andrew, aged 45, said: "She just can't stop smiling now. It was a lot of money but it was worth every penny."

Dr William Jovanovic, from the London Road Dental Surgery in Newcastle, said: "Implants are a top end dental treatment and they are expensive, around £2,000 to £2,500 per implant.

"A dentist needs to gain further qualifications to carry out implants, and the equipment is expensive. Because it is such complex surgery there are often problems and people need to return to their dentist."

Louise looking forward to getting her life back: Page 6

For more on this story, go to www.thisisthesentinel.co.uk/healthabroad

Have you travelled abroad for dental or health treatment? Write to The Editor, The Sentinel, Forge Lane, Etruria, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 5SS, or email us at letters@thisentinel.co.uk



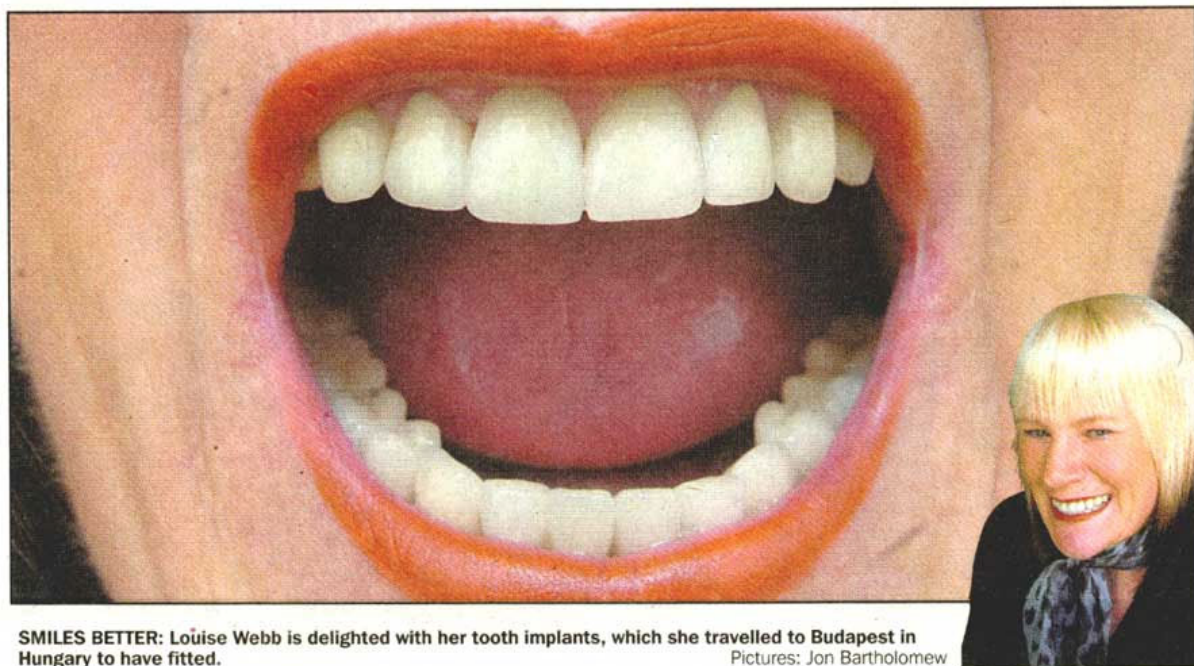
ALL SMILES NOW: Louise Webb became a recluse when a hereditary gum problem caused most of her teeth to fall out. Picture: Jan Bartholomew



CITY'S RALLYING CALL FOR PLAY-OFFS AFTER WEST BROM WIN: BACK PAGE

Mum's Europe trips after NHS treatment denied

I was Hungary for some better teeth



SMILES BETTER: Louise Webb is delighted with her tooth implants, which she travelled to Budapest in Hungary to have fitted.

Pictures: Jon Bartholomew

LOUISE Webb has not stopped smiling since she returned from Budapest with a new set of teeth.

She is now looking forward to getting her life back after spending months afraid to leave the house because she was so ashamed of her appearance.

Mrs Webb, aged 42, had to have most of her teeth removed because of a hereditary gum condition.

She was distraught that she might have to wear dentures and looked into the possibility of tooth implants.

But these were not available on the NHS and would have cost up to £60,000 at a private UK dentist. The last resort was travelling to a clinic in Budapest, where the same work cost around £12,000.

Dental implants are usually made from titanium or titanium alloy. They form a substitute for a natural root and are commonly screw or cylinder shaped.

Each implant is placed into a socket drilled at the location of the intended tooth and the implants then provide the foundation for long-term support of crowns or bridges.

It took three trips to Budapest and 30 hours in the dentist's chair to complete Mrs Webb's treatment. She now has nine of her own teeth remaining, which are crowned, and 13 implants.

She said: "I first started having problems with my teeth about five years ago. We've got a problem in the family - my

A woman who was denied NHS treatment after losing her teeth when she was struck down by a hereditary gum disease paid £12,000 for teeth implants in Hungary. **Aimi Moores** found out how she went about it.

mum had false teeth at 20, and my brother was 18 when he had his. I had to travel to Leek to get an NHS dentist, and she then moved to Derby so I went with her.

"She was doing her best to patch up my teeth but in the end there was nothing more she could do."

Mr Webb came across the Smile Savers Hungary website while trawling the internet.

"I rang them and they put me in touch with past clients, so I knew it was genuine. After seeing my x-rays they offered me various treatment options. I went over in July, November and January for the stages of my treatment.

"I can't speak highly enough of the clinic or Smile Savers. They were very professional, there was no language barrier, and it was so clean you could eat your dinner off the doormat. They helped organise my flights, picked us up from the airport, and we stayed in a four star hotel at a discounted price.

"I would say flights, accommodation and food cost another £1,000 on top of the treatment. It wasn't easy to pay it but we paid in stages every time part of the treatment was finished.

"We had some savings and we scraped the rest together by each visit. We are skint now but it was worth it."

Mrs Webb has two children, Victoria, aged 17, and 15-year-old Rebecca, who is autistic. She says the treatment has

changed her life: "I didn't know what to do before. I was so depressed and I couldn't go out, I felt like a little old lady because my cheeks were sunken. Now I feel 15 years younger, like I've had a facelift."

Victoria, who accompanied her mum to Budapest for the final bout of treatment, said: "She's always smiling now. She doesn't have to worry about things, like what she's eating, and she's much happier. It was a really nice place and all the people treated us very well."

Mrs Webb's husband Andrew, aged 45, who is an audiologist, said: "Before her smile was always reserved, but now she never stops grinning and it's given her back her confidence.

"She had so many years of pain with her teeth and we kept going to the dentist and paying out money but never getting anywhere. When she found out about Smile Savers I told her to go for it. It was a lot of money to find - but it was worth every penny."

Smile Savers Hungary, based in Brighton, was set up by Simon Purchall four years ago after he lost a number of teeth after a motorbike accident.

He said: "I was quoted a huge amount to sort it out. Then I met my wife, who is Hungarian, and I went to a dentist over there. I was amazed by how good it was.

"We come across cases like Louise's reasonably frequently. Last year we organised 700 trips to Budapest. Our clients can't get treatment on the NHS, either because they can't get an NHS dentist or the treatment is not available, like Louise's case."

Have you been forced to travel abroad for health care? Write to The Editor, The Sentinel, Forge Lane, Etruria, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 5SS, or email us at letters@thesentinel.co.uk

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CAPITAL CITY: Budapest, in Hungary.