Stockport, UK: A Canadian dentist has recently made the winning bid on a porcelain crown of Elvis Presley. The affectionately named "Kings Crown" sold for £5,200 (US$8,150) and added to the dentist's collection of celebrity dental memorabilia, in which he already had a tooth from John Lennon he bought last year from the same auction house.

Dr Michael Zuk, a general dentist from Red Deer, Alberta (Canada), purchased the crown together with a model of Elvis Presley’s teeth made for the rock-and-roll star by his former dentist, Henry Weiss, in Memphis. The crown was accompanied by five documents confirming its authenticity, including a letter from Presley’s tour manager Joe Esposito.

Prior to the auction, the crown was expected to be sold for an estimated value of £6,000 to £10,000.

"Whilst it is not a real tooth, as was the case with the Lennon tooth, it is the only one in existence and we expected there to be considerable interest in this," said Paul Fairweather of Omega Auctions.

According to Zuk’s blog, Presley used to have a gap between his teeth. He was so embarrassed by the space that he decided to have one of his front teeth crowned.

Bib holders highly infested

WITTEN, Germany: Sterilisation protocols for dental bib holders are inconsistent and can result in the presence of bacteria such as pseudomonas and micro-organisms, researchers from Germany have proved. In a study conducted at the Witten/Herdecke University, they found bacteria on almost two-thirds of reusable bib holders.

"The analyses of the bacterial load showed that 70 per cent of all reusable bib holders were contaminated with bacteria. The predominant colony types identified were staphylococci and streptococci. On several bib chains, we also found various bacterial rods, pseudomonas, fungi and other types of cocci," said Prof. Stefan Zimmer, lead investigator of the study and scientific director at the Witten/Herdecke University. "Although the bacteria found in this study were all non-pathogenic, in principle reusable bib holders can cross-contaminate dental patients."

The bacteria found on the bib holders do not usually cause disease in healthy people, but can be a threat to immunosuppressed patients, as well as young children and the elderly, who often have compromised immune systems. Bacteria from an unsterilised bib holder can enter the body when a patient touches the bib holder or her neck after a dental visit and then rubs an eye or touches the mouth.

Cross-contamination can also occur when a bib chain is splattered with saliva, plaque, blood and spray from the mouth, when it catches onto hair and accumulates the wearer’s sweat, make-up or discharge from neck acne, and if the dental worker applies a dirty bib chain with her gloved hands before the examination or cleaning.

Several other studies have found similar results. Three US studies found unacceptable levels of microbial contamination on dental bib holders, including pseudomonas, E. coli and S. aureus, the most common cause of staph infection.