“Paradigms in implant treatment planning are beginning to shift”

An interview with Prof. Friedrich Wilhelm Neukam, Scientific Chairman for the annual congress of the European Association of Osseointegration

In a few weeks, thousands of dental professionals will be gathering in the capital of Greece for the annual congress of the (EAO). Dental Tribune Group Editor Daniel Zimmermann spoke with Scientific Chairman Prof. Friedrich Wilhelm Neukam from the University of Erlangen, Germany, about the event and what is on the cards for the world of dental implantology.

Daniel Zimmermann: How are preparations for the EAO Congress in Athens coming along?

Prof. Friedrich Wilhelm Neukam: Preparations for the 26th Annual Scientific Congress of the European Association for Osseointegration (EAO) have been completed and, as has been the case in previous years, we can look forward to an outstanding scientific programme in Athens in October. The four-day conference will focus primarily on transferring the latest scientific findings into dental practice. The central theme of this year’s EAO event is “Treatment Planning in Implant Dentistry”, a topic that a number of renowned international experts will be presenting on.

According to the latest figures from the EAO, a record number of abstracts has been submitted for this year’s conference. How do you explain this huge interest?

Indeed, our latest figures show that more than 500 abstracts on the surgical and prosthetic aspects of long-term results following implantations and augmentative procedures have been submitted for the congress. This continuous rise in submissions could be due to the fact that the EAO conference has become the scientific and clinical annual event for many of our colleagues in the dental and implant community in Europe. In addition, more participants from other parts of the world, notably Asia and the Middle East, have attended our congress in the last few years. We expect the same level of participation for the conference in Athens.

Based on these submissions, is it possible to predict where the specialty is heading?

Upcoming developments in the field will definitely be influenced by a significantly higher degree of precision in imaging technologies that are the basis for computer-simulated implantations and “flapless surgery”. Of course, these rather complex procedures will not be necessary for simple implantations, but with regard to augmentative procedures or complex individual solutions, dentists will be increasingly applying these techniques in the future.

What topics will be the focus this year?

Last year’s congress was all about clinical controversies in dental implantology. What topics will be the focus this time?

Besides treatment planning in implant dentistry, our main topic, the prevention and management of complications and risk factors will be discussed. Furthermore, speakers are expected to shed light on other important aspects such as restoration, treatment planning protocols and the predictability of clinical results.

Do you think that dentists have much catching up to do with regard to treatment planning?

There are standard planning procedures prior to treatments such as implantation or augmentation, as well as prosthetic and surgical therapy. However, paradigms in implant treatment planning are beginning to shift, especially in cases with high requirements for aesthetics and for procedures, like for immediate-load implants. In these areas, we are noticing a technical leap forward in digital imaging and computer-assisted implantation. In my opinion, these topics have proven worthy to be discussed extensively.

What are the most common mistakes in implant treatment planning nowadays?

Generally, we have to take some degree of error into account when transferring the results from the analysis of X-rays, CBCT or CT images to the final treatment protocol. Another important matter is the complexity of treatment planning with regard to the treatment protocol selected. Things are in flux here as well as we actually start a treatment, so that we are able to achieve a more precise and safer implantation for our patients.

EAO congresses are considered to be exceptionally well-organised events. How has cooperation been with local organisations in Greece?

As usual, the EAO Congress is organised in cooperation with local scientific organisations, which helps us to achieve the objectives we have for the EAO Congress, as well as in the scientific and auxiliary programmes and we are very confident that participants can look forward to a highly professionally organised event.

What are your personal and professional expectations of the congress?

For someone like me having been personally involved in the preparations, one hopes that the congress will be a success. It is my sincere belief that all involved in our field will be able to learn a lot from the scientific studies that are being conducted, as well as from colleagues around the world who will be presenting their latest scientific data.

Personally, I am also looking forward to the exhibition. The EAO Congress will present the largest showcase of implantology-related products and technologies in Europe, and I am eager to see which novelties the industry will pull out of the hat. Not forgetting the numerous talks and exchanges with friends and colleagues, whom, unfortunately, I only have the pleasure to meet during our congress.

Last but not least, I am looking forward to seeing Athens, which has been the cultural, economic and scientific centre of Greece for over 7,000 years.

Thank you very much for this interview.

(Translated provided by Annemarie Fischer, Germany)