



# Nations united by innovation

## 2022 EAO congress celebrates comeback in new hybrid format

A review report by Janine Conzato, Germany

For the last two years, the annual scientific meeting of the European Association for Osseointegration (EAO) could only take place virtually owing to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. From 29 September to 1 October, the 29<sup>th</sup> EAO congress took place this year as a hybrid format for the first time in its history, consisting of a face-to-face event held at Palexpo exhibition and congress centre in Geneva and a virtual evening programme—much like the EAO Digital Days in the last two years. A rich programme with numerous educational and networking opportunities awaited participants.

“This digital part is mostly for those who do not want to or cannot travel to Geneva. It features congress teasers and summaries of the respective day, such as short summaries of the plenary sessions or live recorded parts of the discussions. Although it isn’t a replacement of the congress, the evening programme is informative and entertaining,” explained Prof. Irena Sailer, chair of the 2022 EAO congress, ahead of the event. Highlights of the digital congress programme are still available on the EAO

online platform until the end of November. In addition, Prof. Sailer explained that access is free of charge to dentists from Ukraine this year, giving them the opportunity to learn about the latest innovations in the dental world even from the war zone.

This year’s programme featured renowned speakers who shared their knowledge on the use of digital technologies in all areas of implantology and dentistry. In the sessions, current digital techniques were compared with conventional techniques, and clinically relevant recommendations for practice were given. In addition to interesting lectures, there was broad participation by the industry in the exhibition and the supporting programme, offering practical education via forums and hands-on sessions.

### Focus on digital technologies

Under the theme “Uniting nations through innovations”, the 2022 EAO congress focused on the role and potential of digital technologies for communication, work, and



learning and training opportunities. A goal of this year's congress was to critically examine investments in new technologies and their actual benefits for clinicians and patients. Prof. Sailer commented: "It is, indeed, our aim to critically evaluate all the new developments that are offered to clinicians today. All these new tools that promise to improve quality of care while reducing treatment costs for patients do sound tempting, but we will ask whether all of this can be achieved just by investing in technology and changing the practice structure from a conventional one to a digital one. Many dental professionals are asking what evidence there is behind these rapidly appearing developments and whether the evidence is sufficient to abandon well-established paths."

After the ceremonial opening and the presentation of the silver medals for dedicated services to the EAO by President-elect Dr Luca Cordaro to the scientific committee, consisting of Prof. Sailer, Dr Sven Mühlemann (co-chair of the 2022 EAO congress and President of the Swiss Society for Implantology), Dr Christoph Ramseier, Prof. Sebastian Kühn and Dr Fidel Ruggia, the dense programme, which was grouped around three plenary sessions, began. The first session focused on the virtual patient, including the growth of this field as well as the potential role of digital human technology. Might it eventually be possible to create a 3D patient without ever seeing the patient in the office?

No less than senior staff research scientist at Google Thabo Beeler and chief scientist at DisneyResearch | Studios Prof. Markus Gross took the audience on a journey into digital human technology and explained how dentistry can learn from Hollywood. Also, Prof. Florian Beuer, Prof. Dennis Rottke, Dr Andrea Ricci and Prof. Rubens Spin-Neto discussed the virtual patient and went into greater detail on innovations such as computer-designed smiles and 3D radiography.

### One highlight followed the next

The congress was held in collaboration with the Swiss societies of implantology, of oral surgery and stomatology, of periodontics and of reconstructive dentistry, and



one highlight of the congress was the Swiss Day, an interactive congress programme presented by these societies on the first day. The EAO Junior Committee also presented a hands-on workshop titled My first implant that day.

The daily online sessions were a wonderful feature. These repeated a selection of sessions each evening for participants at home on their screens and offered innovative formats such as the Prime Time Debate, Battle and #isittrue?

### Does the digital approach improve treatment efficiency?

The sessions on Friday were dedicated to this question. The icing on the cake for the already knowledge-packed programme presented by award-winning dentists was an ambitious surgical double session on Friday afternoon: the procedures of Dr Istvan Urban from Hungary and Dr Mario Rocuzzo from Italy were livestreamed at the congress. The strengths and challenges of digital and conventional approaches to 3D bone regeneration were explored. Ten participants competed in the clinical video competition, presenting their 7-minute videos on different topics in digital dentistry. The winner, Dr Ramon Gómez Meda, received the European Prize for Clinical Video on Implant Dentistry and €1,000 at the ceremony on Saturday.





Saturday also addressed perhaps the most important question of all for the digital future of dentistry: does investing in new technologies improve the lives of patients and clinicians? This session focused on how to improve communication between clinicians and patients and how to better manage expectations to avoid disappointment.

### Successful family reunion!

According to Prof. Sailer, the EAO congresses have always felt like a family reunion. She therefore expressed in advance: “We hope to rekindle this feeling again this year, as we have missed it in the past years.” An entertaining social programme, such as the get-together and the subsequent congress dinner, as well as the party on Thursday evening and happy hour at rooftop<sup>42</sup> on Friday evening offered participants the opportunity to meet like-minded people and exchange experiences of their clinical work—so it seems that this wish was fulfilled.

At the EAO and Swiss associations members and faculty dinner on Thursday evening, Prof. Georg Watzek was awarded honorary EAO membership in recognition of his outstanding achievements in the field of osseointegration and his commitment to the EAO since joining the association in 1990. Prof. Watzek was EAO President in 2003–2004 and was involved in the development of several educational projects, including the EAO certification examination for implant-based therapy. So far, only seven

people have received this award, among them Profs. Niklaus P. Lang and Christoph Hämmerle. In addition, Prof. Ronald Jung from Switzerland formally assumed the role of EAO President during the congress, taking over from Dr Cordaro.

### International exchange is a must!

Geneva is a truly international city and is the headquarters of numerous international organisations, including the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the World Trade Organisation and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The EAO, founded in 1992, reflected this international character at the congress, where more than 80 countries were represented and which 25,000 clinicians from all over the world attended. Every participant left the congress with valuable knowledge and insights and had the opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones.

Save the date for next year’s EAO congress in the German capital of Berlin from 28 to 30 September. You will not be disappointed!

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