

Meet Prof. Jörg Neugebauer

President-elect of the Academy of Osseointegration

He was the second European, after Michael Norton, to become a member of the prestigious AO, the Academy of Osseointegration in the United States. Now Prof. Jörg Neugebauer (Landsberg, Germany), Secretary-General of BDIZ EDI, is in the starting blocks for the highest office in the AO as President-elect. He will be the first President from Germany of this internationally leading association. In this interview, he outlines the importance and goals in the AO.

Professor Neugebauer, what are the challenges and the importance of the AO? How does this differ from comparable European professional societies?

With over 4,000 members in more than 70 countries, the Academy of Osseointegration is considered the leading international association in the field of oral implantology. Since its inception in 1982, it has been characterised by a high level of practical relevance. This is no doubt due to the fact that most academics in the US consistently maintain a private practice and therefore remain in touch with day-to-day challenges. For example, the Academy of Osseointegration has always been concerned with the importance of patient and staff management, which other professional organisations are only beginning to recognise. The AO specifically brings together professionals with diverse interests and backgrounds to advance scientific research and best clinical practice in implant dentistry. Implantological specialists and general dentists come together to provide optimal patient care using the latest evidence-based science and methods. I like the motto of the AO: we have the specialists, but the work is done in clinical practice, so we need to support this in the best possible way.

How does someone from Germany get to be President-elect of the AO?

I am a native of Germany, from the Baden region, but because I was so enthusiastic about the practical approach of the AO, I have attended all their meetings since 1995 and then became one of only 100 Fellows—with only two Germans following me so far, Professors Fouad Khoury and Christian Mertens.

I have repeatedly presented my scientific results, even winning the prize for best poster presentation in 2002, and have been able to participate in many committees of the AO in addition to my research activities at the University of Cologne. For example, I was a member and then Chair of the Clinical Innovations Committee. During this time more than 200 participants attended my sessions at the annual meetings.

The AO is not only practice-oriented, but also performance-oriented: You do not become President just by spending enough time as a member of the academy; you have to prove yourself by successfully contributing to the various committees. I have also been able to take an active part in one of the international AO summits, held every four years on a specific theme.

Thus, I will have the pleasure of succeeding Professor Hom-Lay Wang as President of the AO in Charlotte in 2024 and of playing a major role in shaping the 2025 Annual Meeting in Seattle.

What is the most hotly debated topic in oral implantology in Europe? Is this different from the situation in the USA?

You would think it should be obvious, but in fact it is only now that patient-oriented outcomes—the benefits of treatment to the patient—are coming to the fore. The dental industry and academic teaching will have to adapt to the fact that practitioners are increasingly demanding simplified treatment procedures. Our generation still grew up with construction kits that taught us elementary mechanical techniques. Later generations have usually not had the opportunity to learn about the “mechanics of me-

chanics” in this playful way. Younger people expect straightforward mechanisms and techniques.

“What’s the data?” used to be a ubiquitous question when something new was introduced. But this is also much less common among the younger generation. Methods or techniques that do not carry the ballast of a long history and start directly into digital mode may well have an easier time of it today.

This is not to deny the importance of sound research and evidence-based approaches, but they will always have to face the question of how quickly and easily they can be implemented in practice. Rather than drifting off into the realms of artificiality, there will be much more emphasis on what works or does not work in real life. That is actually something that I find extremely attracting about the American approach, something that we in Germany and Europe can certainly learn from: you have to perform and to convince others of your approach, but once you have done that, things are implemented very quickly.

What goals have you set for yourself as the future President of the AO?

Of course, I can use the situation to personally build a bridge between Germany, Europe and the USA, to promote and expand mutual exchange and cross-fertilisation—for example simply by being Secretary-General of BDIZ EDI and a member of other professional associations such as EDA, EAO and many more. In addition, under my presidency, the Annual Conference will be given a completely new format. We will have an even stronger international focus, we will specifically involve the younger generation and we will put much more emphasis on digital knowledge transfer. Last but not least, as Associate Editor of *JOMI*, I am very keen to do even more to combine research and practice in this internationally respected journal.

Thank you for your insightful answers.

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