

“Paradigms are beginning to shift”

An Interview with Prof Friedrich Neukam

_In mid october, thousands of dental professionals will be gathering in the capital of Greece for the annual congress of the European Association of Osseointegration (EAO). Dental Tribune Group Editor Daniel Zimmermann spoke with Scientific Chairman Prof. Friedrich W. Neukam from the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg in Erlangen, Germany, about the event and what is on the cards for the field of dental implantology.

_Prof Neukam, how are preparations for the EAO Congress in Athens coming on?

Prof Friedrich Neukam: Preparations for the 20th 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?

Prof Friedrich Neukam: 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?

Prof Friedrich Neukam: 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.

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

Prof Friedrich Neukam: 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 loading, treatment protocols and the predictability of clinical results.

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

Prof Friedrich Neukam: There are standard planning procedures prior to treatments such as





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implantation, augmentation, as well as prosthetic and surgical therapy. However, paradigms 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 things have proven worthy to be discussed extensively.

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

Prof Friedrich Neukam: 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 and the congress hopes to offer some clarification, especially for colleagues working in private practice.

“The use of digital instrumentation based on 3-D imaging has brought new dimensions to implant therapy.”

Prof Friedrich Neukam

The increasing use of digital instrumentation has broken new experimental ground in almost all clinical areas in dentistry. What impact has it had on implant-based restorations?

Prof Friedrich Neukam: The use of digital instrumentation based on 3-D imaging has brought new dimensions to implant therapy. With the help of these innovations, it has become possible for dental practitioners to get a highly precise, 3-D representation of the local soft-tissue conditions, bone structure, and the loss of hard and soft tissue caused by resorption. This has given us a number of new therapeutic approaches. For me, the main advantage is that by using these techniques our knowledge is now far greater before 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 organisers in Greece?

Prof Friedrich Neukam: As usual, the EAO Congress is organised in cooperation with local scientific organisations. This year, the Hellenic Association for Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, the Greek Society for Osseointegration, and the Hellenic Society of Periodontology have helped with the preparations. This cooperation has turned out very fruitful and I would like to take the opportunity to thank all colleagues from these associations for their support.

In addition to the main scientific programme of the EAO Congress, they have also been organising their own meeting, the “Greek Session”, which will give congress participants from all over the world the opportunity to inform themselves about the current status of technologies and trends, as well as the high level of implantology in Greece.

Together with the Paris Team of the Colloquium Group we have invested a great deal of attention to detail and effort into the preparations for the 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?

Prof Friedrich Neukam: For someone like me having been personally involved in the preparations, one first 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.

Editorial note: The interview was led by Daniel Zimmermann, Germany. Translation provided by Annemarie Fischer, Germany.