20th Annual Congress of the EAO

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_The 20th annual congress of the European Association for Osseointegration (EAO) took place under less-than-ideal conditions. Huge piles of garbage bags littered the narrow alleys of the Greek capital, and metro buses and trains were not running for most of the time owing to the ongoing public service strikes. Furthermore, air-traffic controllers in several European countries threatened to stop working during the week in which the congress was to take place. Despite these unfavourable circumstances, more than 3,000 dental clinicians and researchers in the field of implantology attended the dental implant event of the year, which took place at the Megaron Athens International Conference Centre not far from the Presidential Mansion in Athens.

Since 1991, the Brussels-based EAO has organised congresses in different European cities annually, for example, in the Scottish metropolis Glasgow last year and the principality of Monaco in 2009. Despite the prevailing mood of the financial crisis, this year's congress, organised in partnership with three Greek dental organisations, went relatively smoothly, the organiser said. Speaking to Dental Tribune in Athens, most visitors and exhibitors also expressed satisfaction with the scientific and commercial offering. Their only criticism was the distribution of booths over three levels inside the venue that seemed to favour only those companies exhibiting on the ground level. Improvements in this regard were announced, however, by the organisers for next year's event.

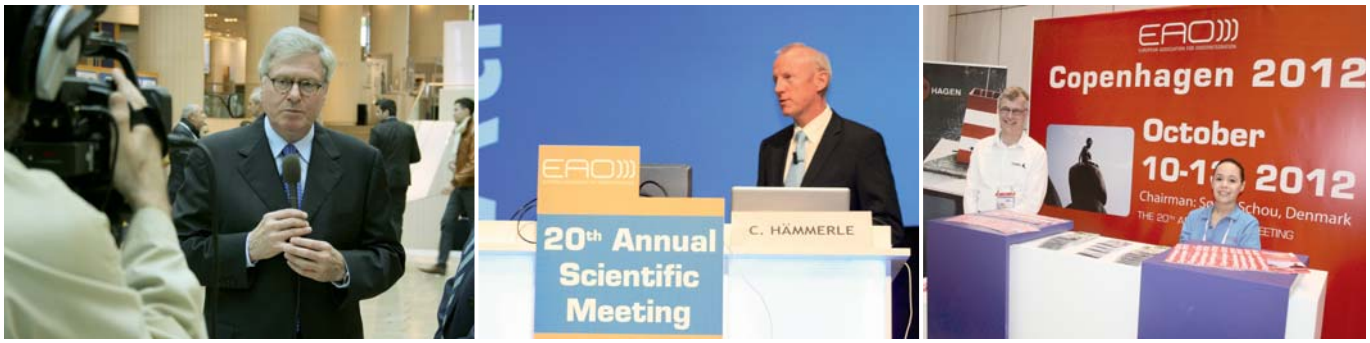
In advance of the congress, German professor Friedrich Wilhelm Neukam from the University of Erlangen, who chaired the Organising Committee this year with Prof. Asterios Doukoudakis from the University of Athens, had said that implant treatment planning would be a major topic, particularly with regard to new imaging techniques and computer-assisted implantation. In a scientific session held on Thursday and moderated by Prof. Christoph Hämmerle from the University of Zurich in Switzerland, the latest methods for computer-aided implant fabrication were discussed by renowned specialists in the field like Dr Theodorus Kapos (USA) and

Prof Sandro Palla (Switzerland). In addition, University of Pennsylvania professor Michael Bergler presented the latest CAD/CAM systems and discussed their current and future impact on dental laboratories in Europe.

Other topics received with great interest were genetic predictability for dental implant loss, which has not yet been scientifically proven, and the pros and cons of implant treatment in adolescents.

In addition to their established product lines, industry players introduced several innovations at EAO. At a press conference held on the second day of the congress, for example, the US implant company Zimmer presented its latest implant design to dental journalists in Europe exclusively. Several new products were also revealed by other industry giants like Nobel Biocare and Straumann. The latter showcased its new small-diameter, soft tissue-level implant, as well as a new restorative material developed in collaboration with 3M ESPE. According to the company, it combines nano-ceramic components with a highly cross-linked resin matrix for improved aesthetics and stability in the fabrication of dental crowns, inlays, onlays and veneers.

Nobel Biocare announced NobelClinician, new diagnostic and treatment planning software for Apple and Windows operating systems, as well as two new NobelReplace implants with a complete range of prefabricated and individualised prosthetic solutions. Further innovations were also exhibited by Keystone Dental, Tigran from Sweden, and the Swiss company CAMLOG.

"We are very pleased with the high-level presentations and scientific works showcased here," remarked Neukam. "However, we are still facing many challenges in clinical research. The conclusions of many speakers were that more research is needed to be able to generate consensus statements in the field."

According to Neukam, the organisation's next congress is scheduled for October 2012 and will look back at implantology research over the past 20 years. It will be held in the Danish capital of Copenhagen._