

# “DGZI and its training programme is internationally highly regarded”

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The German Association of Dental Implantology (DGZI) is the oldest dental professional organisation for implantology in Europe and thus one of the leaders in its field. The association, which has around 4,000 members, is an important part of dental implantology history and firmly rooted with diverse international contacts. DGZI has established co-operation with dental technicians and advanced implant training for dentists. The further development of the association is mainly the task of its executive board. In this issue, we present the First Vice-President, Dr Rolf Vollmer (Wissen, Germany).



Prof. Dr Rolf Vollmer

Dr Vollmer's main duty for the DGZI (since 1996, in collaboration with DGZI secretary Katrin Mielke) is located in his dental office in Wissen, Germany. As First Vice-President and Treasurer of the DGZI, Prof.\* Dr Rolf Vollmer (\*Faculty of Oral and Dental Medicine Cairo University) is responsible for establishing international contacts and expanding DGZI activities beyond the national borders. In this interview, he offers insights into his involvement in oral implantology and the DGZI.

*When did you become interested in dental implantology, and what was the status of this innovative therapy then?*

Dr Vollmer: I sat the dental examination in 1977. During my studies, which I completed in Bonn, the maxillofacial surgeons, Profs. E. Krueger and S. Lehnert, were not particularly skilled in the field of dental implantology. As students, we were taught that oral implantology is a little-used therapy applied in special cases only, for example when a singer or actor wanted to continue the last years of his or her career. When I took over the practice of my father, who died in 1976, I found that we had a significant number of patients with complete dentures. We could only provide dentures in the edentulous mandible with often unsatisfactory results using also the conventional manner without any stabilisation. I personally disliked the grinding of healthy teeth and I was already involved in dental implantology (in 1978) at an early stage.

At that time, further training in the field of oral implantology, which was then not yet recognised by universities as an advanced or specialised field of dentistry, consisted mainly of courses offered by individual companies. These were, for example, the Linkow seminars with Prof. Hans L. Grafelmann (Bre-

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**Fig. 1** \_DGZI meeting Dubai 2015.

**Fig. 2** \_GBOI exam – DGZI international annual congress 2007.

men, Germany), as well as classes with Prof. Egon Brinkmann (Oldenburg, Germany) or in the US with Prof. Leonard I. Linkow (New York) in person. The DGZI was established as a practitioner association in 1970 by Prof. Grafelmann, initially without the support of the university teachers. It was only later that universities established the relevant associations.

I have always believed that dental implantology would develop into a scientifically recognised dental discipline based on a large number of trial and error attempts. This vision became reality in 1982 when implantology was formally recognised as an advanced field in dentistry by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Zahn-, Mund- und Kieferheilkunde (German Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Dentistry) and today it is recognised formally as a dental discipline.

*When did you become involved in the DGZI and what motivated you to join?*

I joined the DGZI in July 1992 through contact with an Aachen colleague Dr Stephan Hausknecht, who had brought the idea of study groups from the US. He established a small study group with DGZI members in the Cologne area. However, he thought the concept

should be applied differently in Germany, not be commercially oriented as was the case in the US. The idea was to establish small teaching and learning groups that would meet every three months to discuss individual cases and present mini-lectures—still using slides at that time. Within the DGZI, a department for study groups was then established. I later directed the groups together with Dr Hausknecht for several years. I was then, in 1996, elected to become the First Vice-President and Treasurer of the DGZI after my predecessor, Bernhard Hölscher, stepped down. As the financial situation of the DGZI under my predecessor was stable, it was in my interest to continue my predecessor's progress.

*Internationally, implantology is evolving rapidly. To what extent are international contacts relevant in this regard?*

International contacts are of great importance for us to broaden our knowledge. It is fascinating that in Europe different concepts have preference in different places. For example, in France, implants with a tri-cortical design, shape and support are frequently used; however, they are rather unpopular in Germany and other European countries. US and Japanese dentists too largely approach therapy in different ways. Even the German conical crowns are unknown overseas. Therefore, it is beneficial for dentists in Germany to learn about new developments and ideas overseas, and for the DGZI to recruit new speakers. While there may be new techniques, sometimes people try to sell something as new although it has been in use already.

*How do you maintain foreign relations? Could you please name a few that are particularly valuable for you personally?*

# Membership Application Form

IM 1/15

I hereby to apply for membership of the DGZI – German Association of Dental Implantology (Deutschen Gesellschaft für Zahnärztliche Implantologie e.V.).  
*Please send this form via FAX to +49 211 16970-66.*

Do you have experience in implantology? (mandatory)

☐ Yes

☐ No

I hereby agree to have my personal data processed for all purposes of the DGZI.

☐ **Full membership** (outside Germany) ☐ **Assistant doctors** (outside Germany) ☐ **Students/auxiliaries** (outside Germany)

⇒ 125 Euro p.a.

⇒ 60 Euro p.a.

⇒ 60 Euro p.a.

☐ I have transferred the annual fee to the DGZI bank account c/o Dr Rolf Vollmer:

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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT**



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**Fig. 3\_** Anatomy course: Dr Vollmer supports students at the University Dresden in 2013.



**Fig. 4\_** Visit and further education at Prof. Leonard Linkow's, New York.

My board colleagues and I maintain foreign relations by regularly attending international conferences in the US and Japan (which has 600 DGZI members currently), among others. During these congresses, we have meetings with the other boards, during which we discuss future joint events or projects, such as meetings and continuing education through curricula that can be developed jointly. We also invite our overseas colleagues to congresses in Germany in order to strengthen our contacts. For example, this year we have established contacts with a university in Mexico City.

*How important is the DGZI training programme for international contacts?*

The training programme is highly regarded in the Arab world, which has unfortunately suffered political unrest in recent times. Background knowledge is necessary to understand the situation concerning the placement of dental implants. For example, in countries like Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates, we face the following problem: placing a dental implant

without a licence is illegal and punishable by law. Once colleagues in this region have completed a course in implantology similar to the German one, which we offer as a kind of licence issue through our representatives, they undergo an interview, which includes a written and oral examination, by the Ministry of Higher Education to be awarded the licence to legally place implants.

In this regard, some countries have already made substantial progress compared with Germany, where dentists can place implants without any specific qualification. The regulatory bodies in these countries ensure that, most importantly, patients are treated satisfactorily and professionally and that their doctors have the requisite qualifications, as should be the case for any treatment. The government of Qatar, for instance, has taken the next step forward by issuing a law that implants placed by licensed implant dentists will be wholly subsidised by government health care insurance. This must be a paradise for implant dentists with postgraduate education.

**Fig. 5\_** Dr Rolf Vollmer (left) welcomes a congress participant at the DGZI congress in Dubai 2005.



*In addition to running your own practice, you are internationally active and a professor in the Faculty of Oral and Dental Medicine at Cairo University. Could you tell us more about your activities abroad?*

My duties at the DGZI, as well as my practice, include promoting the DGZI's reputation. This is usually achieved through lectures on postgraduate education in different countries, which I regularly attend. The intention is to promote the DGZI through sharing expertise. Anything made in Germany is automatically regarded as well-made and reliable. Concerning my professor role at Cairo University, I am there on a regular basis along with other colleagues from the DGZI board. In addition, invited speakers, not necessarily members of the DGZI, give presentations or hold lectures. We have also worked together





with the dental faculty in developing a master's programme, which is being launched this year, specific to the situation in Egypt, which will require a substantial amount of paper work.

*So much work and travel certainly needs some balance. What do you do in your leisure time?*

In addition to having to balance my activities between the DGZI and my practice, I have a family with three children aged between 13 and 18. Every summer, I go to Spain with my family, where we relax doing all kinds of activities, such as water sports. Furthermore, I try to avoid the health problems that a dentist develops during the course of his or her professional life through poor posture by swimming regularly. I try to keep active during my free time with various activities in the garden and restoration of half-timbered houses.

*Where do you see the future of DGZI in relation to other implantology associations?*

I foresee the DGZI in the future being among the top of the largest professional associations. To achieve this place, the DGZI board would have to continue pursuing personal contact with our members, which is not something other scientific associations (which might be more university oriented) have succeeded in doing well.

In the future, we will focus on the concerns and interests of colleagues of the younger generation, for example in the young study groups. Positive developments in the Hamburg and Cologne groups have already been seen. A leader of one of the study groups has already been accepted to the extended DGZI board. We have also been addressing our young colleagues' needs by means of a more modern approach, for instance our new e-learning curriculum. During the past thirty years, the DGZI has evolved immensely

from the simple practitioner association it was in the beginning. We have a great mixture of science-based connections to universities and contacts with practitioners. For example, our president, Prof. Dr Herbert Deppe (Clinic and Policlinic for Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at the Technische Universität München hospital), is a university professor himself and the first assessor of the DGZI board. Prof. K.-O. Henkel is a senior physician and medical director of oral and maxillofacial surgery and plastic surgery in the government military hospital in Hamburg. Several scientific projects have been initiated in recent years, including studies on socket and alveolar ridge preservation, heat generation while drilling, a finite element study on current topics, such as the "All-on-4®" concept, by Dr Paulo Maló, and a three-year study by Prof. Werner Goetz from the Department of Orthodontics at the University of Bonn about the integration of bone replacement materials.

**Dr Vollmer, thank you for taking your time for these interesting information.**

**Fig. 6** Dr Vollmer and his wife Dr Martina Vollmer at the 44<sup>th</sup> DGZI annual congress.

**Fig. 7** Japanese participants at the GBOI exam in 2007.

**Fig. 8** Congress in Orlando: (from left) John Minichetti (President AAID), Dr. Mazen Tamimi (DGZI representative Jordan and Middle East) and Dr Rolf Vollmer with his children Nikolaus, Bernadette and Leonard.

