



Fig. 1

Pioneer of implantology celebrates 90th birthday

Author_Jürgen Isbaner

On 16 February, Prof. Dr. Hans L. Grafelmann, a pioneer of implantology and the founding president of the German Association of Dental Implantology (DGZI), celebrated his 90th birthday.

Traditionally, round-number anniversaries such as this one are used to list all achievements in chronological order and honour them accordingly—which will be done as it deserves below. In congratulating him, I would like to take a more personal look back at the accomplishments of a man whom I have known from my work as an editor and organiser of numerous implantology congresses for 22 years.

In 1994, when OEMUS MEDIA first organized an implantology congress—the first IEC Implantologie-Einsteiger-Congress (which this year is being held under the name IMPLANTOLOGIE START UP in Düsseldorf for the 22nd time)—implantology in Germany was still at its beginning. Although, in 1970 already, some enthusiasts around the then 45-year-old dentist from Bremen established the DGZI, which was the first European organisation for dental implantology.

Today, in Germany alone, there are three professional associations for dentists working in implant dentistry, in addition to the DGZI, with several thousand members. From a handful of implant systems worldwide, an overwhelmingly large implantology market

Figs. 1 & 2_Prof. Dr Dr Grafelmann now and then.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

has sprung up with about one million implants placed per year in Germany alone. This area of dentistry, which was once greatly mistrusted, has not only found its way into the mainstream, but also evolved into a central interface of modern dentistry in the course of digitalisation.

Since success has many fathers, the next generations of implantologists, especially in implantology societies, have at times been very depreciatory about those practitioners who paved the way for implantology in Germany—with a great deal of personal commitment, securing private funding for their study visits to the US, and against considerable resistance from universities. They recognized opportunities and utilized them to build up their own successful business. However, from the very beginning, they also strove to establish a sound scientific basis for their empirical experiences.

In 1970, Grafelmann, in collaboration with New York pioneer of implantology Prof. Leonard I. Linkow, as well as 85 interested colleagues, organized the first implantology congress at the Park Hotel Bremen, which resulted in the establishment of the DGZI as mentioned. Subsequently, the Bremen Implantology Seminars, which offered the first ongoing further education opportunity in the area of implantology, were held.

From 1970 onwards, the DGZI published its own scientific publication, called *Orale Implantologie*, which contained case reports and studies—it was the forerunner of today's *Implantologie Journal*. At that time, the first statistical data published by the DGZI showed that more than 3,341 blade implants inserted in a period of five years (1970–1975) had yielded a success rate of 92.9 per cent. According to Grafelmann, the failures were mainly due to mistakes in the indication for the atrophic jaw, insertion techniques, as well as an inappropriate

prosthetic restoration. Blade implants have long since made way for highly modern implants. In the *Implantologie Journal*, former DGZI President Prof. Gyula Takacs once, regarding implantology pioneer Prof. Ernst Bauer and his Bauer screw, likened implants in the hands of Grafelmann and his colleagues to bumblebees: according to the laws of physics, bumblebees cannot fly; in the hands of Bauer, implants work.

After his term as President of the DGZI and after retiring as a practising implantologist, Grafelmann supported the work of the DGZI by means of his foundation, the Prof. Dr Grafelmann Stiftung, among others. Several years ago, for example, he made a donation towards the promotion of research, further development and education activities to the association at its 42nd annual congress in Hamburg. To this, he linked the hope of improving peoples' quality of life, also in old age, thereby following the goal of the DGZI.

I have experienced Grafelmann, along with his wife Barbara—who managed Oraltronic (now Sybron Implant Solutions), the company founded by Grafelmann, for many years—as a charming and humorous contemporary. I remember when we placed his lectures in the final programme slot because of his never-ending talks at our beginners' congresses. I have experienced and reported for the *Implantologie Journal* the honest appreciation and professional attention he received from his colleagues at a congress in Shanghai in China (1997) and at world congresses held by the International Congress of Oral Implantologists.

Prof. Dr Dr Grafelmann not only shaped former generations of implantologists, but also supported us as a young publishing house in our publishing activities from the very beginning. There remains but one thing to say: many thanks!_

Fig. 3 Jürgen Isbaner, Prof. Dr Dr Hans L. Grafelmann and his wife Barbara (former manager of Oraltronic).

Fig. 4 Dr Andreas Lindemann (practice successor of Prof. Dr Dr Grafelmann), Heike Isbaner (former sales force Oraltronic) and Claudia Lindemann (OT medical).

Fig. 5 Prof. Dr Dr Hans L. Grafelmann at his birthday speech.

Fig. 6 The couple Prof. Dr Dr Hans L. Grafelmann with Shiho Miyake, daughter of a Japanese colleague Dr Yasumasa Miyake, and her partner.

Fig. 7 DGZI past president Prof. Dr Dr Hans L. Grafelmann and Dr Friedhelm Heinemann at the 40th annual DGZI congress 2010 in Berlin.