Since its introduction in 2013, the ConnectDental platform from Henry Schein has helped numerous dental professionals make the difficult leap into digital dentistry. This autumn Dental Tribune International interviewed Vice President of Technology Patrick Thurm to find out how dentistry has changed in the digital age and why Henry Schein ConnectDental provides guidance in an ever-growing market.

Four years ago, we met here at the EAO congress to discuss the introduction of the ConnectDental platform. How has the dental landscape changed since then, in your opinion?

In the last four years, we have seen increasing penetration of digital technology, in both dental laboratories and practices. These technologies are now used across the whole field of dentistry, not only by implantologists and increasingly orthodontists but also by general practitioners. Of course, their integration is being realized at different paces, but we are seeing increasing networking with open systems gaining more and more market share. This is having a positive impact on penetration, which is exactly what we predicted four years ago.

We no longer speak of technologies, but of integration and solutions. The International Dental Show this year clearly showed that dentistry has finally arrived in the digital age, and all large providers of materials and technologies have adjusted their portfolio to be able to contribute to this growing field.

With the ever-growing number of solutions, entering the field can be overwhelming. How does ConnectDental provide orientation?

For us, this is the main role of Henry Schein ConnectDental. The platform helps to preselect, choose and connect products to support dentists in their efforts to offer new treatment concepts and achieve higher patient satisfaction. Meanwhile, 3-D printing has also finally arrived in dentistry. In this field, we are now offering complete solutions with implant planning software that allow practices and laboratories to produce surgical guides together, which means that they no longer have to rely on external providers. This way, they can provide a service that is much closer to the patient. There are actually implantologists working with surgical guides for every implant they place.

Digital dentistry offers amazing possibilities and the ConnectDental platform makes best use of them, either as a chairside solution in combination with Dentsply Sirona CEREC or as a solution using an intraoral scanner and the services of a laboratory, for which we work closely with 3Shape and other leading manufacturers of digital impression solutions. That is also the reason we no longer call it an open system but ConnectDental Trusted Solutions, which means that the solutions we offer are thoroughly tried and tested.

Where do you see the future of ConnectDental?

As trusted advisers, we are committed to helping dental professionals to successfully integrate digital technology into every step of their clinical workflows. Therefore, we will continuously extend the ConnectDental platform further. On the technology side, we always try to have the best solutions in our portfolio. Since we are a global company, we are certainly positioned very well in this field and are able to include any new trend in our system through partnerships with every important provider. Within Henry Schein, we work closely with our affiliates CAMLOG and Biohorizons in implantology, and other divisions of the company, such as Henry Schein Orthodontics. We also collaborate with leading clinicians, clinics, laboratories and universities to develop excellent solutions.

Education too is a major focus and we invest a great deal of resources in this area. So there is plenty more to come...