"The future of dentistry is digital and focused on prevention"

An interview with Curaden CEO Ueli Breitschmid

Swiss dental company Curaden is one of the few businesses in the industry that adopt a holistic approach to dentistry. The company combines high-quality dental products, pioneering training systems and prophylaxis concepts for long-term oral health. In this interview, CEO Ueli Breitschmid talks about new ways and knowledge in dentistry and optimal preventive care as key to good oral health, as well as prevention programmes that both promote patients’ health and offer practices financial success.

Dental Tribune International: Mr Breitschmid, Curaden aims to offer more than just dental care products. You advocate comprehensive training in the field of dental prevention. Why is this issue so important?

Ueli Breitschmid: Curaden is the only company that, in addition to manufacturing products, provides patients with the necessary knowledge and skills, in cooperation with trained instructors, to take control of their oral health themselves. We have developed our knowledge and products with the aim of teeth remaining healthy for a lifetime. Our corporate philosophy combines the innovative CURAPROX products, our dental educational system iTOP and the practical Prevention-One plan. Our goal is to reduce the prevalence of gingivitis, periodontitis and tooth loss. Therefore, we support comprehensive soft-tissue prophylaxis. Finally, gingival problems are still the most common cause of poor oral health. We support prophylaxis to this end with our great interdental toothbrushes, our iTOP seminars and other services.

In any oral health discussion, it is always important to look at the combination of a high-quality product and the trained application thereof. The product alone without a trained user changes little or nothing. Therefore, 80 per cent of people in developed countries have gingival diseases; because nobody has shown them proper oral hygiene. Only a well-trained person can motivate and instruct someone else.

How can control and continued motivation be achieved?

Patients and dentists should follow a regular schedule concerning both treatment and training. Today’s approach of one or two dental visits annually is no longer appropriate. Going to the dentist or the dental hygienist should not be an annual event, but more frequent. Just think how often we enjoy a beauty treatment or a pleasant massage. White and well-kept teeth are part of the modern concept of body awareness, much like a trip to the fitness centre.

So, does this mean that most oral health problems can be solved through regular prophylaxis?

Dental prophylaxis is only one aspect of oral health. It seems much more important to consider dental training. For years, leading dentists and dental companies have been in favour of a change in dental education.
Preventive dental therapy should hold at least the same position as restorative dentistry. Every dentist knows how little is taught in dental schools about prevention. There are long-established and financially attractive prevention concepts for the entire office staff, including Prevention-One. Today's digital solutions offer a painless and quick prophylactic therapy. The future of dentistry is digital and focused on prevention, and the dentist of the future as a preventive physician is responsible for patients' overall health.

So you envision dentists and doctors working more closely?

Dentistry and medicine will certainly continue to move closer together, as the interaction between the oral tissue and other organs is now better understood. Slowly but surely, dentists will be recognised for their role in medicine. They are the gatekeepers of health, because the mouth represents the basis of almost all chronic diseases. In time, dentists will measure blood pressure and take saliva samples or blood samples. It will become possible to decrease the prevalence of chronic diseases, including cancer, Alzheimer's disease, cardiovascular disease and diabetes, through better oral health. At the same time, medicine of the future will be able to detect signs of gingivitis or periodontitis.

Mr Breitschmid, you focus on holistic oral health prevention rather than restoration. What concepts does Curaden offer in this regard?

We focus on optimal prophylaxis for patients and dental professionals. Individually trained oral prevention (iTOP) is our internationally well-known educational system. For this purpose, we have been working together with established dentist Dr Jiri Sedelmayer. He has revolutionised the approach to teaching, motivation and control of individual prophylaxis for long-term dental health. This approach includes regular training, the proper tools and a good dose of motivation. First, we begin with the dental professionals, who pass their new knowledge and skills directly to patients. All our iTOP seminars are supervised by independent dentists and dental hygienists who have completed the training themselves.

iTOP addresses one of the major issues in every dental practice: how to motivate and instruct patients to brush perfectly, with good outcomes. Through iTOP, we offer individual training with regular monitoring and correction of the learnt prophylaxis techniques. We use the latest technologies and modern cleaning techniques; in short, the right mechanical plaque control. Of course, the seminars are open to those dental staff with years of experience too. There are always new ways to brush teeth and gaps properly.

How long is the iTOP programme?

The iTOP programme is structured consecutively. We offer multi-day seminars for both beginners and advanced participants, as well as for prospective iTOP trainers. Our recall seminars enhance knowledge and provide additional motivation. iTOP also teaches communication strategies. Communication with the patient and within the team too are key to dental health. A further advantage of iTOP is the global coverage of our educational programme. Whether in Europe, Asia or North America, dental staff can benefit from the comprehensive solutions of our iTOP training.

I would like to recommend our iTOP workshop on 23 June in Basel in Switzerland to all dental hygienists. This is being held as part of the 2016 International Symposium on Dental Hygiene. We have invited top speakers from Ireland, South Africa, Canada and Switzerland to talk about their experiences with iTOP in their respective fields and how it has helped them to achieve sustainable oral health in their patients.

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With iTOP for students, Curaden is targeting students and young dentists. Why does Curaden place so much importance on the early training of students?

First, students should maintain their teeth for perfect oral health; only then can they treat their patients. The dentist and patient should always have the regular care of their own teeth with good toothbrushes, toothpaste and interdental brushes in common. This allows the aspiring dentist to become familiar with how the damage to be repaired arose. Early on, we convey the principle of touch to teach—the proof is in the pudding.

How can dental professionals better apply your iTOP concept for the benefit of the patient and practice?

We offer them a financially attractive service package for the long-term dental health of their patients, called Prevention-One. Prevention-One is our innovative treatment approach to prophylaxis services. The plan includes regular dental cleaning and dental procedures, as well as our CURAPROX products. We believe strongly that Prevention-One represents the future of dentistry.

No matter the product, whether Prevention-One or CURAPROX, we strive to be accessible to patients. In 2015, we founded the first Curaden clinic, in the heart of London. The practice offers top facilities and, of course, all the products and concepts of Curaden.

Thank you very much for the interview.