Digital diagnostics in practice: Leading Perio Prevention Centers® in Europe

Prevention visited KU64 in Berlin, one of the first dental practices to integrate the ORALyzer, a new device capable of precisely quantifying the concentration of aMMP-8 in the saliva, into its prophylaxis concept. With 120 employees, it will soon become Europe’s largest dental clinic. KU64 offers the entire spectrum of dental care. KU64 is also the German flagship of the Perio Prevention Network. We talked to practice owner Dr Stephan Ziegler and Michaela Kunkel, head of the dental hygiene and prophylaxis department.

How important is prophylaxis in your clinic?

Ziegler: There is no alternative to prophylaxis. Our approach goes far beyond the mouth, as we recognise that oral disorders and those of the body as a whole are closely connected. All dentists must integrate prophylaxis into their practice. Without it, all our work would be for nothing. Every patient and dentist must understand that professional tooth cleaning is the foundation of any treatment. Prophylaxis now takes up the major focus of our practice. We have 17 employees working only in prophylaxis, among them four specialists in paediatric dentistry.

Many of your peers say that focusing on prophylaxis is biting the hand that feeds one. What do you say to that?

Ziegler: I would say that it is not fun destroying and repairing your own work over and over again, with fewer teeth or larger cavities each time. Repairing is not the aim: we want to treat healthy patients. And if we do have to repair something, KU64 stands for sustainable restoration. That is a win-win for both patient and dentist. However, if neither the patient nor the dentist changes anything, they both lose. A lost tooth is the worst result for a dentist as well. The goal must be causal therapy, that is prophylaxis.

Moreover, we always take an interdisciplinary approach to prophylaxis. Together with diabetes specialists, gynaecologists and cardiologists, we work on the early detection and effective treatment of periodontitis. That is why we decided to become part of the Perio-Prevention Network. I am impressed by the vast network of medical professionals who have integrated aMMP-8 testing into their daily practice routine. We work together on changing the relationship between dentistry and medicine.

Recent studies have affirmed the need for advanced prevention in this regard. Have you seen an increase in soft-tissue prophylaxis in your practice?

Ziegler: We definitely spend more time on periodontal prophylaxis and are able to diagnose periodontal disease earlier than a few years ago. We have even gone a step further and now use the PerioSafe test, which allows us to identify the probability of periodontal disease in periodontally healthy patients. I would say this is something revolutionary, enhancing periodontal treatment completely. In the end, complete healing of periodontitis in the sense of restitutio ad integrum cannot be achieved. We should aim to detect and prevent the disease instead.

You are a full-service practice with all of the instruments available for the
best possible prophylactic treatment. While did you decide to integrate the ORALyzer in your practice?

Kunkel: The PerioSafe test does not simply analyse periodontitis, but within minutes tells us the risk of the patient developing periodontitis. On the one hand, we consider this as a great tool for motivating and communicating with the patient. On the other hand, blood and saliva testing methods are quite common in other medical disciplines and every doctor can and should use PerioSafe. We see PerioSafe and ImplantSafe in the case of probable peri-implantitis as another step towards a fully integrated approach to medicine. The new digital reader ORALyzer gives us exact information about the aMMP-8 concentration, lets us print the result immediately and send it to the referring doctor in certain cases. Digital prophylaxis used to be a thing of the future, but I definitely see the aMMP-8 reader as an effective tool for collecting data, motivating patients and helping them achieve sustainable health.