Interview: “Clear, step-by-step instructions are essential for long-term success”

By Kasper Mussche, DTI

Dental professionals should be empowered to instruct and motivate their patients to maintain proper oral hygiene. iTOP (short for individual trauma prophylaxis paradigm) is an hands-on training programme developed by Dr Ji Sedelmayer and organised by Swiss oral health company Curaden that teaches dental professionals to set up patients for a lifetime of perfect oral care through practice, correct tools and techniques, and motivation. Dental Tribune Online spoke to iTOP Top-Level International Lecturer and Instructor Dr Mia Girotto—a driving force behind iTOP’s success—who has been training professionals and students worldwide for over 12 years.

**ITOP gives knowledge to dental students and professionals. What do you expect them to take from a session?**

Visitors to an iTOP training session can expect to finally learn what dental students and professionals to set up patients for a lifetime of perfect oral care through practice, correct tools and techniques, and motivation. Dental Tribune Online spoke to iTOP Top-Level International Lecturer and Instructor Dr Mia Girotto—a driving force behind iTOP’s success—who has been training professionals and students worldwide for over 12 years.

**What is the advantage of an iTOP session for professionals?**

In many things dentistry, you can do the perfect job, whether it be as a general dentist, specialist or technician, but if there is no compliance from the patient, restorations or other medical procedures will end up in failure. Regardless of the excellence of the work that was put in, patients should be correctly trained and motivated to maintain good oral hygiene after a procedure. If dental professionals taught their patients the correct techniques, and gave them the correct tools and knowledge, this would definitely set them apart from other professionals and would also prevent failure.

**Aside from your iTOP activities, you work as a periodontist and implantologist. How does that influence your vision for iTOP?**

Aside from your iTOP activities, you work as a periodontist and implantologist. How does that influence your vision for iTOP? iTOP has definitely been very useful in complementing these two fields. In both, success rates are very dependent on proper oral hygiene maintenance and patient motivation.

**How can dental professionals motivate their patients?**

There are many ways to motivate a patient. There are even documented schools and methods, but some of the basic advice would be: do not argue with the patient, find out what his or her own reason is for the visit and stick with that. Try to be as supportive as possible and keep in mind that this is a process that needs time—even the smallest progression deserves acknowledgement.

**You have been an iTOP trainer and teacher since 2006. How have you seen the programme and prevention in general change?**

You have been an iTOP trainer and teacher since 2006. How have you seen the programme and prevention in general change? If I have to be very honest, the biggest changes I have seen are in the market. When I first started giving iTOP lectures, I would often joke about the market following the iTOP lead. Ten years later, we are witnessing this exact thing happening. As for the iTOP programme itself, it has adapted to certain cultural and national specifics, but other than that, the core really has not changed much, as it is easy and understandable. Of course, we still discuss, debate and always strive to improve.

**How does iTOP fit in with the Curaden philosophy?**

When I say I have gained a new family through iTOP, part of that feeling is also being well connected with the Curaden company. The company is incredible at listening to the inputs we give, as well as being flexible and adaptable to the needs of professionals and consumers. The level of honesty in approaching this dynamic market makes the Curaden company and the iTOP philosophy very, very compatible—a winning team, really.

**What about your vision for the future? Where do you want to see iTOP go personally?**

A long time ago, I jokingly said, “It’s time for iTOP to conquer the world.” What I meant by that is that I want iTOP’s benefits, knowledge and techniques to become available to every person in the world, not only dental professionals.