European dental market survey available in digital and hard copy

By DTI

KORTRIJK, Belgium: The 2017 Survey on the European Dental Trade provides a valuable overview of relevant topics and trends in the European dental industry. Launched by the Association of Dental Dealers in Europe (ADDE) at this year’s International Dental Show in Cologne in Germany, the latest edition of the market review is now available in digital format. Dental dealers and manufacturers can purchase the survey report now via the new ADDE online shop.

Again produced in collaboration with the Federation of the European Dental Industry, the 2017 Survey on the European Dental Trade indicates a further shift towards digital dentistry, manifesting in overall growth of online shopping and use of CAD/CAM systems and intraoral scanners. Besides analysing current trends, the report covers the latest medical device regulations, parallel trade, market surveillance and free movement of dental professionals.

Among the survey findings are that the number of practising dentists grew slightly compared with 2015 (in all European countries, excluding Sweden, Denmark and Bulgaria, which were not analysed), totalling about 282,000 in 2016. In contrast, the number of active dental technicians decreased across Europe. The number of patients per dentist remained the same across Europe. In terms of sales, the most significant growth rates were observed in Austria, France, Hungary, Spain and Italy. Regarding the European average across sales segments, sundries, implants and technical services remained stable, while equipment sales increased slightly.

“Our 2017 Survey on the European Dental Trade comprehensively assesses the sales values for the main product categories, sales segments and distribution channels. It also provides unique insights into the market shares of dental dealers and manufacturers in the European Union,” said President of the ADDE Dominique Deschietere. This includes the number of customers and end users, sales values and segments (equipment, sundries/consumables, prostheses, technical services, implants and technical services), and VAT charges and their impact on the market.

The latest survey is now available for purchase on the ADDE website in hard copy and as a PDF from the new ADDE online shop.
Legislative parity and transition period priorities for dental industry post-Brexit

By DTI

LONDON, UK: The British Dental Industry Association (BDIA) has called on the negotiating heads of both the UK and the European Union to agree to a transition period after the Brexit. In a letter addressed to Secretary of State David Davis and chief Brexit negotiator for the EU Michel Barnier, the organisation, together with the Federation of the European Dental Industry (FIDE), said that such an extension would be necessary to assure parity in UK and European medical device legislation in the framework of a new trade agreement.

"Recently published EU legislation will be applicable in the UK until it leaves the EU in March 2019," they stated in the letter. "Therefore, there is a risk that UK and EU legislation may diverge, to the detriment of patients and businesses across Europe."

Among other points, both organisations have recommended that an agreement should include the UK’s adoption of EU medical device regulations and the country remaining an active participant alongside EU member states in the European regulatory framework. Furthermore, the UK should maintain full involvement and participation in the EU database for medical devices (EUDAMED), they wrote in the letter.

"The production and supply of dental devices often involves a complex cross-border network across Member States. In other international markets, it is non-tariff barriers, often arising from conflicting regulatory regimes, that most seriously limit trade," they added. "Ensuring that such barriers do not emerge between the EU and UK will be crucial in protecting the future oral health of EU and UK citizens, and the global competitiveness of European dental businesses."

According to the BDIA, the UK represents one of the key markets in the European dental market, with an annual turnover of almost £0.5 billion. It is the first time that the BDIA and FIDE have publicly announced a detailed list of priorities for the ongoing negotiations.

With their letter, both organisations have joined a growing number of industries worried about the state of Brexit talks and the negative impact of a no-deal scenario as proposed by several members of the UK cabinet, including Prime Minister Theresa May. The start of negotiations for a post-Brexit deal was recently postponed by the EU after discussions about the future rights of EU nationals in the UK and vice versa, and a “divorce bill” stalled in October.

After invocation of Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon, UK membership of the EU will end on 29 March 2019.

Newly launched device makes every toothbrush smart

By DTI

LONDON, UK: A new, innovative device designed to support patients in their toothbrushing routine has been launched in the UK today. Brushlink tracks individual behaviour, like brushing frequency, duration and—for the first time—angle, and provides real-time guidance and performance monitoring to users.

While tracking of brushing behaviour is already available with the latest generation of electronic toothbrushes, Brushlink can be used with manual toothbrushes too, according to developer and London dentist Dr Dave Patel. Users of the device receive a score after each brush and tips on how to improve their behaviour. The collected data can be sent to a mobile app via Bluetooth and stored for up to three months for later use.

The main intention behind the device was to give dentists more information about their patients’ brushing behaviour in addition to encouraging better brushing, Patel said. "We have always had to rely on what we see inside the mouth every six months rather than having any reliable data about how people are brushing. I invented Brushlink to plug this gap by providing coaching to patients but also accurate monitoring of everything they are doing with their toothbrush between dentist visits.”

The launch follows worrying results of a new study that has indicated that brushing habits among people in the UK are seriously lacking. Conducted among 2,100 participants, it found, among other things, that one in two people constantly miss a quarter of their teeth when brushing. Brushing efficiency was worst among young people, according to the study, of which only every third said that they brush their teeth thoroughly.

In addition, over 60 per cent reported never having received correct brushing instructions from their dentists. The study was conducted by Opinion between 24 and 26 October.

"There is no substitute for good tooth brushing practices when it comes to maintaining a healthy mouth, yet it would appear from the survey that there is a lot more that we can all do to achieve this effectively," commented Prof. Elizabeth Kay, MBBS, Foundation Dean of the Plymouth University Peninsula School of Dentistry, oral health topic expert for the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, and a Brushlink scientific committee member.

"The fact that this survey is in association with the launch of a new dental care product—and one which I think is the most amazing oral health product that I have seen in a long time—should encourage people to take its findings seriously as it has been commissioned by a group of dentists who are passionate about improving the oral health of the nation," she added.

Fewer products removed from BDIA Dental Showcase

By DTI

BIRMINGHAM, UK: Less counterfeit or non-compliant dental equipment than last year had to be removed from the BDIA Dental Showcase, a representative of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has revealed. Over the three days of this year’s show in Birmingham, the organisation found an estimated 500 pieces of equipment that may have posed a threat to public safety, MHRA investigator Maxine Marshall told Dental Tribune Online in Birmingham.

The numbers are in line with a general trend of less critical equipment entering the market-place in recent years. Particularly the distribution of high-risk equipment like handpieces and K-type files has been on the decline, which is the result of the work that the agency has been doing with the British Dental Industry Association (BDIA), according to Marshall. Since 2014, both organisations have been running an awareness campaign aimed at dental professionals and the general public to educate about the possible dangers of fake or non-compliant products.

"I think the message is under stood. There have definitely been fewer referrals of counterfeit products to MHRA," Marshall said. "However, our work remains challenging because of the Internet. We constantly track suspicious websites and remove listings from online marketplaces."

Marshall announced that her organisation is planning to talk to both organisers and exhibitors of the Dental Showcase to introduce measures that help identify possibly suspect products earlier in future exhibitions. The successful cooperation with the BDIA will also continue.

According to MHRA figures, over 10,000 individual pieces of non-complaint or counterfeit dental equipment entered the UK market in recent years. Particularly K-type files have been a threat to public safety, as they have been seized three days of this year’s show in Birmingham, the organisation found an estimated 500 pieces of equipment that may have posed a threat to public safety, MHRA investigator Maxine Marshall told Dental Tribune Online in Birmingham.

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What would Dr Mo Lar do? Part 7

By Richard Lishman, UK

Over the course of an 11-part series, the 4dentists group explores ways to tackle a number of personal and professional challenges by providing advice and guidance to a fictional character Dr Mo Lar. In this seventh article of the series, Managing Director of the 4dentists group, Richard Lishman explains how Lar should go about purchasing a second practice to expand his business.

Among many other business ambitions, Dr Lar would like to expand his business by purchasing an additional practice. He already has some experience of practice acquisition, having gone through the bidding stage, as is the careful preparation and affordability tests that would have been done. As such, he will need to make sure that he has the necessary support before and during the process. Lar also needs to consider the impact of current market trends and think about having enough time available for the process before placing a bid, as one wrong move could jeopardise his overall financial goals. The location of the new practice is important as well, since too much travelling time between the two could have a direct impact on his ability to successfully run both businesses.

Practice funding

In order to secure funding for a second time, Lar has to be able to prove that he can afford the repayments. Detailed accounts and affordability tests are therefore imperative leading up to the bidding stage, as is the careful compilation of a business plan. As for the actual borrowing, he has the option of borrowing the entire sum of the money from the bank or releasing funds from his existing practice and then taking out a smaller loan. Say Lar has been making profits of £200,000 per annum for the last three years, but has only drawn £50,000, it would equate to a total increase in net worth of £150,000. If he wanted to, Lar could borrow that equity from the business. Of course, he should discuss both options with his Independent Financial Adviser before making a decision.

Interest rates are another important factor Lar should consider before purchasing his second practice. If he were to take out a loan with a different provider than the first time and they offer better rates, he could use this opportunity to move all his funding to one place. Not only would that simplify his repayments, but it would make them cheaper too.

Besides additional funding, Lar would be required to have the necessary critical illness and life cover in place, as all banks require purchasers to have the correct cover in the event of sickness, injury or death. With life cover already in place from his first acquisition, he would simply need to update his policy to reflect his additional financial responsibilities.

Considering business structures

When expanding a business, there is an opportunity to change its corporate structure. As it stands, Lar is the sole proprietor but, should he choose to, he could form a partnership, incorporate to become a limited company or register as a limited liability partnership. Purchasing an additional practice will change his tax structure, liability and tax burden so it is important that he chooses a structure that will make the business worth his while. In order to increase his income and save on tax, he will need to work closely with an accountant to weigh up his options.

Employees

Purchasing another practice will undoubtedly involve taking on more staff. As such, Lar should consult considering a lawyer to put together the necessary contracts for new employees. The principle statement would need to clearly detail certain provisions, such as the legal names of the employer and the employee, the job title, the date of the commencement of employment, the details of compensation, the working hours and leave. Most importantly, he must make sure that all the terms of the contract are standardised across all members of staff, otherwise it could lead to allegations of discrimination.

For staff who are self-employed, his lawyer needs to draft an appropriate written contract detailing their arrangement, as there are considerable risks to dental practice owners associated with these agreements.

There really is a lot to consider before expanding a business or practice, which is why it is always advisable that someone in Lar’s position utilises the services of an expert team. Only then, can one guarantee that the process is executed seamlessly, with excellent results at the end.

In the next article, Lar looks at selling his business.

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Richard Lishman is the Managing Director of 4dentists, a firm of independent financial advisers who help dentists across the UK manage their money and achieve their financial and lifestyle goals.