Swedish Nobel Biocare partners with German university

Berlin dental school to join university network in the US, Europe and Asia region

Daniel Zimmermann | DT

LEIPZIG: Nobel Biocare is extending its worldwide University Partner Program. During a press conference in January, the Swedish dental manufacturer signed an agreement with the Charité University Medical School (Charité UMS) in Berlin. According to Dr Andrej Kielbassa, Dean of the Department of Periodontology at the Charité UMS, the partnership will incorporate implantology and CAD/CAM procedures into the dental curriculum and offer financial support as well as academic exchanges between the school and other programme members based on Nobel’s Internet-based educational tools. An independent Academic Advisory Board will make sure that the school is able to reach the goals of the partnership and keep its education free from corporate interests, Dr Kielbassa said.

As one of the largest medical faculties in Europe, Charité UMS is the 23rd dental school to join Nobel’s University Partner Program. Recently, it announced plans to become one of the most modern and advanced service providers of medical care in Europe by 2010. The partnership with Nobel Biocare is seen as a major step in achieving this goal.

“We strategically focus on the newest trends in research and dental education,” explains Prof Martin Paul, dean of the school. “By joining the Nobel Biocare’s worldwide network, we hope to offer our current and future students an advanced dental curriculum in a more international environment that gives us the possibility to share knowledge and experiences with 22 other universities around the world.”

Nobel Biocare is one of the largest providers of aesthetic dental solutions worldwide. In the last quarter of 2007, their sales revenue increased by 8% to 142.3 million Euro. Since 2005, the company has finalized partnership agreements with eight US universities and claims to educate 25% of all dental students in implantology and use of implants and CAD/CAM solutions. In the Asia-Pacific region, the University of Sydney, Ho Chi Minh City, and six Chinese dental schools belong to the network. Kielbassa said that Saudi Arabia joined the programme last November as the first dental school in the Middle Eastern area. To facilitate the exchange of information between the schools, Nobel Biocare has developed a number of e-Learning tools that also provide information about clinical procedures and studies that can be downloaded to mobile devices like an iPod.

Executive Vice President Mr Robert Gottlandt said that the new partnership with the Charité UMS is a major achievement for his company. He also said that they are in talks with other universities and “so far I have not revealed any details.” We have noticed a huge discrepancy between the number of implant treatments being offered to the society today and the number of dental schools change their curriculum, he continued. “It could make a real difference. Our expertise in customer service, technological know-how, communication skills and resources can combine with the expertise of primary healthcare clinicians to make that difference in the healthcare sector,” he continued. Mr Adams confirmed healthcare professionals working with the company would retain their independent contractor status.

Use of CAD/CAM dental systems projected to grow

Daniel Watson | DT

LONDON: Unstoppable entrepreneur Richard Branson is moving into healthcare and dentistry, it has been announced. His Virgin Group has established a new business called Virgin Healthcare and plans to open centres with general practitioners (GPs) of the National Health Service and other healthcare professionals in the UK, including dental teams. The company said the move followed an extensive two-year consultation with key stakeholders from across primary care.

The first Virgin Healthcare centre is expected to open later in 2008; five more centres will follow by the end of 2009. The company plans to work with existing GP practices in their current structures and under their existing contracts with Patient Cooperation Treatment. It also plans to add other healthcare services in consultation with local providers to meet local needs. These could include dentistry, diagnostic services, screening, and a pharmacy as well as a range of conventional and complementary therapies.

The company is currently advertising for dental staff on its website. “Dental care is one of the services we would seek to provide in a Virgin healthcare centre alongside the GP practice,” a spokes-woman for Virgin said. “This is an all-under-one-roof concept bringing together primary care services. Dentistry would be one of the private offerings in our range of ancillary services which could also include physiotherapy and podiatry.”

The man heading up the venture is Mark Adams, who was previously chief executive of the private healthcare provider Nethcare UK and before that was with Denplan. He said Virgin was moving into healthcare because it felt it could make a real difference. “Virgin’s expertise in customer service, technological know-how, communication skills and resources can combine with the expertise of primary healthcare clinicians to make that difference in the healthcare sector,” he continued. Mr Adams confirmed healthcare professionals working with the company would retain their independent contractor status.

Cefla Dental Group takes over Chinese Suzhou Victor Medical Equipment

Michael Watson | DT

TORONTO: The market for newly purchased dental computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing (CAD/CAM) systems in the US, Europe and Japan surpassed US$250 million in 2007. It will expand in response to patient and dentist demand for all-ceramic CAD/CAM-produced restorations, which are growing at the expense of metal-based restorations, according to a new report by the Millennium Research Group in Toronto, Canada. Improved technology will also foster the market’s growth by enabling manufacturers to raise prices in some segments of the market.

Dental labs are increasingly outsourcing crown and bridge computer-aided manufacturing production to milling centres. Accordingly, in the US, unit growth for scanners used in the outsourcing process will reach nearly 20% annually over the next five years. In Europe, this annual unit growth will exceed 20%. The more labs that can offer CAD/CAM restorations, the better,” says Chris Shutsa, Millennium Senior Analyst. “This will allow more dentists to meet the increasing patient demand for custom-milled crowns and bridges.”

In Japan, the market for dental CAD/CAM systems remains very small despite the size of the country’s population. Japanese dentists and laboratories primarily use non-CAD/CAM ceramics and metal-based restorations. Similar to other markets, however, as dentists become better educated with respect to the aesthetic and functional benefits of CAD/CAM restorations, the number of crowns and bridges made through the CAD/CAM process will increase. Millennium projects that this will drive a greater number of dental labs to incorporate the necessary technology to manufacture such restorations. Moreover, dentists will add chair-side systems into their practice to facilitate increased CAD/CAM restoration placement with a quick turnaround.

Cefla Dental Group announced the acquisition of Victor Medical Equipment, a Chinese-Taiwanese joint-venture specialised in the production of high-quality dental units like the AM208 and AM8050. According to company officials, the acquisition will strengthen Cefla’s local presence in China, and is key to its strategic expansion into potential growth markets, products and technologies. There will be significant investments in the Eastern China-based production site in Suzhou, and the development of a product range based on the existing Victor brand that will be specifically designed to respond to the needs of dentists in the area whose choice of equipment is based long-term reliability, quality materials and outstanding value for money, the company says.

Cefla has consistently increased its dealings within the Chinese market through the Anthos brand for the last 20 years, and is a recognised supplier of advanced dental equipment to the country’s major hospitals. “This recent acquisition brings us much closer to our Chinese customers,” states Eros Nammi, Managing Director of the Cefla Dental Group. “We are now an established local presence and will be able to serve the market with the same degree of professionalism and quality as we offer all our European customers.”

The Cefla Cooperative, which consists of four business divisions, increased their consolidated revenues by 18% to 327.9 million in 2006 despite a rather difficult external economic environment. The company also closed the fiscal year 2006 with a consolidated net profit of 13.5 million Euro, up by 1% compared to 2005 results. Cefla considers themselves a global player in the dental market. They supply integrated treatment centres for dental surgeries and have production sites in several offices in Italy, Europe and the United States. Following the launch of the company’s third brand for high-tech imaging technology MyRay in 2007, Suzhou Victor Medical Equipment will become the fourth name in Cefla’s brand portfolio.