Japanese takes over European operations of SHO FU

Dental Tribune

HONG KONG/LEIPZIG, Germany: The Japanese dental company SHOFU Inc. is changing its management offshore. During the International Dental Show in Cologne, the company officially announced that Akira Kawashima of SHOFU Japan will take over the management of the European subsidiary in Germany from April 2011.

Wolfgang van Hall, the current Managing Director of SHOFU Dental GmbH, will step down but hold a consulting position for another year. He has been with the company for more than 50 years.

Kawashima announced his intention to expand the company’s product line for dentists and intensify sales activities in European markets. Prior to his appointment as General Manager of SHOFU GmbH, he worked in the International Department of SHOFU Inc. in Kyoto in Japan, where he was responsible for several product launches, including Vintage and the zirconium silicate Ceramic.

He also spent one year as a trainee in the SHOFU GmbH headquarters in Germany in 1984.

“T he German dental market differs greatly from the Japanese,” Kawashima said. “While in Japan there are many independent and smaller dealers, in Germany the main revenue is achieved by dealer groups that use a common sales and infrastructure. This demands a different approach for us as a manufacturer than in Japan.”

Based in Ratingen near Düsseldorf, SHOFU Dental GmbH currently operates in more than 60 markets in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

Its product portfolio consists of instruments and materials for restorative and cosmetic dental procedures.

SHOFU Inc. also maintains a sales office in Tonbridge in the UK.

Demand for dental gold declines

Yvonne Bachmann

LONDON, UK/LEIPZIG, Germany: The demand for gold used in dental applications has reached a new record low in the last quarter of last year. According to the latest report by the World Gold Council, UK, dental applications made of the precious metal recorded a year-on-year decline of 8 per cent in the last three months of 2010.

The annual worldwide demand declined by 5 per cent compared to 2009 to 49.8 tons worth US$ 2 billion.

The negative trend may have been accelerated by the 24 per cent year-on-year rise in the dollar gold price over a period, suggests the World Gold Council’s Gold Demand Trend, a leading industry resource for data and opinion on worldwide gold demand.

“T his segment has been steadily declining in recent years due to a migration to more affordable applications and the elevated gold prices during the quarter served only to accelerate the rate of attrition”, it states in the Demand Trend. Substantial falls were recorded in all most every market. Most significant changes in volume terms were recorded in Germany and the United States.

Goldquadrat, a German manufacturer of dental alloys, approves the latest statistics. “The demand for gold used for dental applications has noticeably declined since 2005,” chief executive officer Wilhelm Mühlenberg told Dental Tribune Asia Pacific. Owing to rising prices, gold has become very attractive to investors but very unattractive to patients, he said.

According to Mühlenberg, this trend is irreversible, even though there is still a demand for gold as it is a reliable dental material and has been used successfully for a very long time.

In contrast with this decline, the worldwide gold demand for all industries, including dentistry, surged to 5,812.2 tons in 2010, reaching a ten-year high and a 9 per cent rise compared with 2009, as per the World Gold Council. The major reason for this positive trend was the demand for jewelry, which saw a rise of 17 per cent.

The dental market is providing Germany with economic drive.

“The dental market is expected in 2011. According to the latest numbers released by the organiser Koelnmesse in March, 9 per cent more visitors attended the world’s largest dental trade show than in 2009. With more than 1,950 exhibitors, the show also saw a 7 per cent increase in industry participation.

The promising figures are in line with the latest reports from the dental industry, particularly in Germany. There, the market has gained new momentum following a slight drop in sales in 2009. The latest figures from the Association of German Dental Manufacturers (VDI) suggest that revenues grew from € 7.55 billion last year and further growth is expected in 2011.

Even though there was a definite digital trend, new simplified endodontic file systems, as well as improved filling materials and dental instruments were also launched.

In view of a successful IDS, German Dental Association President Dr Peter Engel called on policy-makers to conduct overdue revision of regulations on licences and fees for dentists in the country. “The dental market is providing Germany with economic drive,” Dr Engel commented. “Policy-makers have to create health policy frameworks so that these innovations can be put into practice.” Interest groups and dentists have sought a revision of the current dental fee system for years, which they say penalises patients and limits the financial autonomy of dentists.

The next IDS will be held from 12 to 16 March 2015 at the Koelnmesse fairground in Cologne.