iTOP: It is like using a harp instead of a rock guitar

In prophylaxis, the individual approach is as important as the training aspect. Curaprox’s prophylaxis training (iTOP) therefore, considers ‘prevention’ to be more than just using fluoride toothpaste. When Rolf Kufus, a Zurich dentist, talks about prevention, he emphasises the demands that prevention makes on dentists and patients alike. He compares it to music: “In most cases, prophylaxis means that the guitarist in a heavy metal band suddenly has to learn to play the harp. This is not something you learn overnight—and especially not without a teacher,” Kufus said.

The three most common mistakes.

Cleaning in the wrong place: the toothbrush is not close enough to the gums, with the result that its bristles cannot reach the sulcus.

Brushing with too hard a toothbrush: if the toothbrush bristles are too hard, the patient automatically moves the brush away from the gums and simultaneously causes brushing damage.

Brushing with too much pressure: together with cuts by flossing (and resulting recession of the gums), one the most frequently corrected errors.

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With a toothbrush, a single tuft brush, as well as interdental brushes and dental floss in hand, participants learn over several days how prophylaxis is more than just fluoridation and that it means efficient and atraumatic brushing, individual training and even tailored coaching.

Prophylaxis can also be a pleasure as well as it can motivate. Yes, my teeth are clean, my gums are healthy!

Train and train once again

iTOP is individually trained oral prophylaxis, that rejects the thinly-spread “watering-cans” principle in favour of individually tailored prevention. Every mouth is different. If one form of prophylaxis is ideal, another leads to sustainable success. And because the individual approach often means “scrub-less” that is also the training aspect that iTOP alumni such as Rolf Kufus emphasise in particular. How else are we to compete against the force of habit, which so often causes us to brush our teeth incorrectly from childhood on—with too much pressure from too hard a toothbrush and dental floss where only an interdental brush is of use?

“Patients with tooth-cleaning damage such as exposed tooth necks are unaware of being ill but instead they feel they’re doing everything right,” said Kufus. “And nobody wants to intentionally destroy their mouth. These are all simply wrongly trained habits.”

Catherine Schubert, dental hygiene specialist and iTOP instructor, knows how detrimental these habits can be: “All too often, I see patients who are still suffering from bleeding gums even after ten years of treatment because they were not educated and trained. This bleeding could so easily be stopped,” she remarked.

Implants—the failures of prophylaxis

Rolf Kufus realigned the prophylaxis concept for Personalised Dentistry in his practice after his first iTOP course. “People are living into their 90s nowadays. It’s better without exposed tooth necks.”

He recalls that a tooth goes through about six stages in the course of its existence from emerging to falling out. “If we succeed in delaying each of these stages by a few years, then, except for special cases such as accidents or agenesis, an implant may no longer be necessary.”

In this new interpretation, an implant can be ultimately seen as a failure of prophylaxis. It is no longer like it used to be, when prophylaxis was primarily understood to mean brushing three times a day using fluoride toothpaste and the brunt of the dental work was placed on tooth repair. Today, there is an ever increasing number of dentists who view prevention as an essential part of the Hippocratic oath—namely the obligation to dental health as a whole. This also changes the role of dental hygienists who are shedding their role as “abrasive cleaners” and are turning into partners and fitness trainers for the oral health of patients.

Ultimately, iTOP also changes the role of a dental practice, moving away from repair towards prevention—without losing sight of profit orientation.

More information are available at

www.kufus.ch
www.curaprox.com
www.iTOP-dental.com

How dental care can be fun

The three most common mistakes.

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The three most easily achievable improvements.

Using an interdental brush: iTOP graduates learn with surprising speed just how efficiently the spaces between the teeth can be cleaned.

Feeling rather than intellect: DH professionals mainly instruct patients using a model. In iTOP courses, they learn on each other how atraumatic tooth cleaning actually feels.

Brushing perceived as pleasure: bleeding disappears in an instant thanks to a change in brushing technique and a soft brush. Dental care and its results create happiness.