

Position



Promote innovations, retain amalgam as dental material

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President of the German Dental Association



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Every two years, the International Dental Show, IDS, is a barometer for the global dental market. This is where the innovations will be presented today that the dentists and dental technicians will be working with in the practices and laboratories of tomorrow. Dentistry is dependent on the support of the dental industry in the form of innovations and developments. In the face of an ageing population, our aim must be to preserve oral health as long as possible. Comprehensive dental care, novel therapies and progressive care structures - combined with high-quality technical and durable medical products - are necessary to achieve this aim.

Apart from innovations, don't neglect the basics

Despite the necessary pursuit for innovations, we mustn't however neglect the "basics". Care that is affordable and available to all people forms the basics of dentistry. This is why amalgam - contrary to the current demands of the European Parliament - should continue to be available as a filling material. It is reliable, cheap, easy to process and very durable. Worldwide there is no other filling material that has been examined as frequently and as intensively as a possible health risk. It is not still counted as being part of the standard care by the legal national health insurance companies without good reason.

In February, the European Commission presented an acceptable proposal for a new EU mercury guideline, which is to be used to implement the UN agreement passed in 2013 in Minamata. The aim of the agreement is to reduce the worldwide consumption of mercury. In the course of the legislation process, especially the European Parliament is demanding that amalgam should be done away with in the near future, in spite of all of the above-mentioned advantages. According to the will of the responsible parliamentary committee, amalgam should be gradually discontinued by the end of 2022 ("phase-out"). From then onwards, the material should only be used in exceptional cases that are necessary due to medical reasons. This goes far beyond the provisions of the Minamata Convention, which merely foresees a reduction of the use of amalgam ("phase-down").

The following already applies in the dental area today: Amalgam fillings shouldn't be used for pregnant women or children, in the case of serious kidney diseases or proven allergies. Furthermore, amalgam separators have long since been legally prescribed for the recycling of amalgam in Germany - in contrast to other European states. Overall, the share of amalgam fillings continues to decline in Germany. However, it should still be used as a filling material, because it cannot be completely replaced by other materials to-date and it allows many people to enjoy dental care and an optimum therapy. It remains to be seen as to whether the European Parliament will assert itself with its in my opinion excessive demand.

The young colleagues need innovations

However, there is also good news from the political scene: After 60 years, the draft bill of the new dental licensing regulation has finally been available since last month. That was long overdue. Fortunately, most of the demands of the German Dental Association have been included in the amendment. I hope that the colleagues-to-be will soon be licensed according to the requirements of modern dentistry and thus be able to partake in its innovations.

The opportunity to fully partake in innovations is especially important for the young generation. As the current Dental Practice InvestMonitor of the Institute of German Dentists (IDZ) documents, the founding a new, individual practice costs Euro 484,000 on average. This is a very large sum for young colleagues and signifies a major life-influencing decision. This is precisely why they have to be able to fall back on high-quality and durable equipment for the practice, like that presented here at IDS.

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