VERBAND DEUTSCHER ZAHNTECHNIKER INNUNGEN

VDZI

Bundesinnungsverband

Statement by Uwe Breuer, President of the Association of German Dental Technicians

Digital competence within the classic trade

Dental technicians use their knowledge to implement the new technologies for the well-being of the patients

on the occasion of the European Trade Press Conference
for the International Dental Show (IDS) 2017
on 6 December 2016 in Cologne

In case of queries:
Gerald Temme
VDZI Press Office
Tel.: +49 (0)69 665586-40
gerald.temme@vdzi.de

The International Dental Show (IDS) is unparalleled as a global event for the dental industry. Not only the figures of the largest leading trade fair in the world prove this. Both the visitors and the exhibitors confirm that IDS is the place for benchmarking for the entire dental industry. The further developments and innovations in the section of the manufacturing technologies and materials can be examined carefully here every two years.

As a trade fair for the national and international dental industry, IDS is primarily an exhibition that highlights the developments in the products and processes within the dentist and dental technology sectors. In the case of all of the technologies, materials and treatment methods exhibited, the main focus always lies on the patients or the care of the patients.

Parallel to the technological developments, all of the industry participants are observing a growth in the awareness for health among the population. This also applies for oral health and the expectations thereof. Patients have in the meantime increased demands in dental care with dental prostheses. For example, the treatment should on the one hand be comfortable and less time-consuming. On the other hand, the patients want to be able to choose the suitable care solution for themselves - in terms of both quality and price - from a variety of alternative treatment options.

More than half of the Germans currently require false teeth. A survey by the Association of Private Health Insurance Companies came to this conclusion. 54 percent of the people questioned, who don't have any dental prostheses yet, assume that they will require dental prostheses later on. Hence, more and more German citizens are taking out private additional dental insurance to secure such possible future treatment. In 2015 it was around 15 million people in total.

The intensive professional and quality-oriented collaboration between the dentist and the master dental technician is a guarantee for the universal dental care of the patients in Germany. Hereby, with his experience and knowledge, for instance in the area of the growing care field of implantology, the master dental technician supports the dentist already during the planning of the individual patent work.

The dentist and the master dental technician form the professional expert team and thus guarantee the optimal care of the patients on a daily basis. No technological development is perceivable that could question this close professional collaboration.

On the contrary the dynamic technological developments in the dental industry will in future demand an even closer collaboration between the dentist and master dental technician in order to continue to increase the care quality together using the new possibilities available.

The profession of the dental technician

In the meantime, many technologies, such as new scanning technologies, open CAD/CAM systems, processing machines, rapid prototyping methods and new material developments are being implemented in the master dental technician laboratory. As a result, the procedures in the laboratory are changing of course. In this way, in addition to the classic methods for new

treatments, the digital production technology, in particularly for crowns and the production of bridges, are gaining in significance and are also replacing the partial steps of the production.

However, the classic, manual production methods still outweigh the others. The basic knowledge gained during the vocational training is an indispensable pillar of the dental technician profession. This is the only way that the entire spectrum of dental prosthesis solutions can continue to be offered for patients individually. Technical aptitude, intuition, the ability to concentrate, comprehensive anatomical and medical knowledge, expertise in physics and chemistry, visual perception and aesthetic judgment - all of these qualities still characterise the dental technician.

A knowledge of biomimetics and biomechanics, knowledge and experience about the behaviour and the specific application limits of new complex material technologies become more and more important too. Increased competence in laboratory management is also indispensable. For example, this encompasses professionally informing and advising the dentist and the patient. Beyond this, it is necessary to optimise the interfaces of the dental treatment activities on the one hand and the dental planning and production services on the other.

Several issues are currently being discussed in the public media with a view to the trade in general and dental technology in particular: Which influence is the digitalisation having on the profession of the dental technician in Germany and how are the work procedures in the laboratory changing? Is it possible to produce dental prostheses using a 3D printer even without the dental technician?

This question was posed for all new production methods, for instance one only has to thing about the dissemination of the digital milling technology. Today, there is a shortage of qualified dental technicians. The professional requirements placed in dental technicians regarding their knowledge and abilities have become wider and more diversified. Dental prostheses are and will remain to be more than a workpiece - they are instead a medical product that is individually produced for the individual patients. Which is why this handicraft is considered to be a risk-intensive dental technician skill and is quite rightly subject to the state licensing procedure. And this must remain the case in the future too. Training young dental technicians assures this, which is essential for a wide offer of dental technology services, whether classic or digital.

The delegates from 18 member guilds of the VDZI have drawn up the corresponding vocation educational policy decisions in a comprehensive position paper. A diversified qualified further education concept as well as the conceptual networking of the trade's own training and further education centres are to ensure that the skilled workers or master craftsman's diplomas of the dental technology trade are more quality assured and more comparable with each other. Furthermore, it is a central professional and educational policy task for the dental technician trade to secure the quality of the training and improve the professional perspectives of young people.

The training of the apprentices in the CAD/CAM technology section has been successfully implemented. In order to be able to convey comprehensive theoretical knowledge and practical skills to all of the prospective dental technicians independently, the inter-company training of apprentices has been offered by the guilds and the Chamber of Trade for the past four years.

Furthermore, cooperations between the master laboratories are important for the safeguarding of an extensive offer of the entire diversity of dental technology services. Here, the VDZI recommends that the dental laboratories engage in closer networking among each other. In this way, it can especially be logical for smaller laboratories to join forces for example to offer navigated implantology services and CAD/CAM produced superstructures.

Economic situation in the dental technology trade

The 71,000 practising dentists in Germany can fall back on the practical and local services of 8,300 professional dental technology laboratories. In the year 2015, 65,663 people (dental technicians, dental technology assistants and further laboratory workers) were covered by statutory health insurance by the trade association (BG ETEM/Trade Association for Electrical Engineering, Textile and Precision Mechanics) responsible for the dental technology trade, around 35,000 of whom are skilled dental technicians employed full-time in the production area. 6,000 apprentices alone are learning this profession in the companies.

In total, over 5,600 young people are training to become dental technicians. As such the dental technology trade is training well above the average number of people compared to the economy as a whole.

In the year 2014, around Euro 7.1 billion was spent in the Federal Republic of Germany on dental technology services including the materials. In 2014, the turnover of the dental technology laboratories was approx. Euro 4 billion.

VDZI exhibition stand and the Gysi Prize for young talents

The German Association of Dental Technicians is representing its member guilds and the master dental laboratories with its own exhibition stand at IDS 2017 again. In Hall 11.2, Aisle S 10/12, laboratory owners and employees from the laboratories, but also dentists and their employees can inform themselves about the profession-related and economic offers. At the exhibition stand divided up into two parts a particularly focus will once again be placed on the theme that is important for dentists and patients, namely quality assurance in the dental technology trade. Here, interested parties can learn everything about the industry-specific quality assurance concept, QS-Dental.

Furthermore, it is a matter particularly close to the hearts of the VDZI, to offer the skilled and dedicated young members of the dental technology trade their own platform at the largest dental show in the world. By organising its famous competition for young professionals, the Gysi Prize, the VDZI is once again setting a positive signal for the vocational training as a dental technician. The participants in the Gysi Prize will be festively celebrated in Cologne on 23 March.