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prevention

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1
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Opinion:
A vision and
a **need for prevention**

Advertorial:
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When my son Timo was born, late one evening in June this year, we had to wait a few more seconds before we could finally hold our precious little gift in our arms. Shortly before his birth, my girlfriend and I decided to store stem cells collected from his umbilical cord blood. The body of a newborn contains innumerable stem cells that are able to prevent, regrow and regenerate damaged tissue. When speaking to doctors, I do not have to explain the vast medical benefits that stem cells have. However, while speaking to dentists, I would like to explain why we spent a good sum of money for something we will probably, and hopefully, never use. I do not want my son to ever experience any disease. I want him to avoid what can and cannot be cured. And I want my son to never experience caries, periodontitis or tooth loss.

In the same way that stem cells can potentially treat cardiovascular diseases, hematopoietic diseases, and Type 1 diabetes, periodontal pathogens correspond with exactly the same illnesses. Oral science has advanced to such a degree that we have a good understanding of biofilm, caries and periodontal diseases. Yet, while dentists have all the tools and knowledge necessary to prevent disease, they've remained the same designers, architects and mechanics as 50 years ago. The dental industry has developed solutions for permanent sub- and supragingival plaque removal, yet the communication with and motivation of the patient remain absent or insufficient.

The authors of this magazine agree that prevention needs to become an integral part of every dental practice. They also agree that dentists should provide general healthcare for their patients and see them multiple times per year for prophylactic treatment and saliva or blood tests. Ideally, they should also refer patients to other doctors and know the referring cardiologist, diabetologist or gynaecologist. Dentists would then not be considered dental artists, but rather doctors of oral health. None of this will be possible without changing the patient's

perspective of dentistry and oral health through education, motivation and repetition.

In other words, the best medication you can prescribe (to your patient and your team) is education.

The world of dentistry has come a long way. Restorative dentistry has been embraced, while digital implantology has paved the way for long-lasting and affordable dentures. CAD/CAM technology produces ceramic perfection within minutes and motor-driven endodontics has become so efficient and simplified that millions of teeth can now be saved instead of extracted. However, while restoration will always be needed, preventive and restorative dentistry have only just begun to collaborate, particularly with regards to diagnosis and treatment.

The success of preventive dentistry remains in the hands of society and politics. Prevention seems to grow in countries with public health care systems and dental hygienists. Dental hygienists are key to providing oral hygiene instructions, education and patient motivation. Although dental hygienists do not even exist in France and Belgium, let alone in developing countries, prevention might be achievable in Western countries soon. However, the centuries-old notion of "prevention is better than cure" has no boundaries and should be the way forward for all medical fields.

We can further agree that preventive dental medicine will take generations to become the new standard in dentistry. 50 years ago, it would have been impossible to publish this magazine, for example. And in 50 years, diagnosis and treatment will have become so advanced that doctors will only debate about the different preventive options that are available.

So, I'm looking forward to smiling at Timo in 50 years. And I can't wait to see him smile.

*Thank you,
Marc & Timo*

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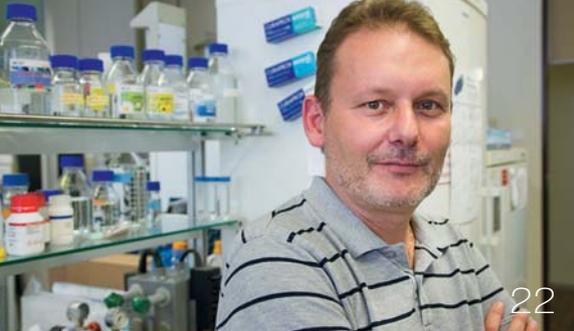
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Prevention One is a new business model for dental practices. Cover image courtesy of Curaden AG.

Curaden **believes in prevention** like no other company in the world



by *Ueli Breitschmid*

AUTHOR: UELI BREITSCHMID

When Dental Tribune approached us with the idea of a new magazine on the topic of preventive dentistry, I thought: "Well, it's about time! You should have done this a while ago!"

For those who don't know me, I often like to speak from the heart and the dental industry lies very close to my heart. I've been in the business my entire life and I've been the CEO of Curaden AG for 40 years. Curaden produces oral healthcare products, such as the famous CS 5460 toothbrushes, through our brand CURAPROX. We also provide many educational programmes, such as iTOP (individually trained oral prophylaxis). I am so proud to be a part of such a forward-thinking company, since I truly believe that no mouth will ever change without the use of the right instruments and proper education.

At Curaden, we are proud to manufacture all our products in Switzerland, since the Swiss are known for their high quality, perfection and precision. Yet I was disappointed to hear that one in every three dental students in Switzerland leaves dental school before their graduation. There is no other field of study that experiences such a high dropout rate! What's surprising is that the overwhelming majority of dental students do not simply drop out. The numerus clausus, in Switzerland and many other places in the world, limits the number of university applicants and is very high for human medicine. Also, prospective students for both dentistry and medicine have to pass an admission test in order to study. However, admission is not only easier for dentistry, both medical and dental students spend their first semesters in the same classroom, learning the same things. That's why pre-clinic dental students who are more interested in becoming medical doctors, can easily take the available spaces of medical students who drop out.

This situation leaves me with two questions: why do we not start educating dentists as medical doctors of oral health? And, why don't we consider dentistry as another medical discipline that works closely with cardiology, otolaryngology and other specialist fields?

Until now, we have educated dentists to become "tooth-repairers". Dentists learn to place implants in the most difficult positions possible, they learn how to perform endodontics in the most severely curved canals, but when do they learn how to educate their patients on oral health? When will we understand that a healthy mouth is about more than just clean teeth? And when will we understand that our mission should be to keep patients healthy for a lifetime by providing them with the right products and education?

Of course, as a dental industry, we still need to sell toothbrushes, interdental brushes and mouthwashes. Many other companies in the dental industry need to sell implants, endodontic files and drills. Essentially, all manufacturers, dealers and dental professionals still need to look at remaining profitable or increasing profits. And there is no doubt that as an industry, we will still need to repair. Fortunately, our restorations have improved and can now last forever, but our preventive care can definitely be improved.



When will we understand that our mission should be to **keep patients healthy** for a lifetime by providing them with **the right products and education**?

Mind the trends

The demand for preventive care has rather recent roots. Firstly, the megatrend of having a healthy lifestyle has now also moved into oral care. People want better oral prophylaxis, beautiful teeth and fresh breath. Oral care, however, is about so much more than oral hygiene. Healthy teeth and gums go hand-in-hand with self-confidence, a good morale and can also lead to healthy bodies. Essentially, the desire for a healthier lifestyle has created a demand for new products and new approaches to provide the patient with oral healthcare services in dental practices.

Secondly, scientists have discovered that oral health conditions have a major impact on people's general and mental wellbeing. Oral health starts from infancy, by preventing jaw deformation and mouth breathing, continues into youth by motivating teens to maintain good oral health, and should not end when a patient becomes an adult. Everyone, regardless of his or her age, should feel attractive and beautiful. This means that we also need to help patients with dentures, implants and dental appliances to maintain their oral health.

Finally, it has also been discovered that the microbiota in the mouth has several very important functions that help maintain overall health. As the dental industry, we need to make sure that patients understand that they need bacteria in their mouths for their immune system. One simply has to destroy the bad bacteria, especially in hard-to-reach areas, such as interdental spaces, while keeping the good ones. While we have done a good job towards improved biofilm management, we need to

present more scientific evidence that shows that the natural oral biofilm needs to be kept in a healthy balance. This includes everyone, from babies and children to teenagers, adults and seniors. Everybody needs a healthy mouth for a healthy body in order to reduce the offset of chronic diseases.

Better health for all

If health insurance companies, governments and health organisations really want to establish a prevention-driven mind set in society, dentists are key. Dentists have the education, the capacity and the position in society to make prevention a priority—at least in Western cultures. The dental professional has the potential to become the preventive doctor of the future. Of course, this possibility is still very far from our current reality.

However, most oral diseases are preventable, simply through the daily care of teeth and gums. That's why we want to change dentistry from a field of repairing, to one of health-orientated medicine. In this way, the dentist is responsible for the general health of people and not only for their teeth and gums. Curaden wants the dentist to finally become the gatekeeper of health by taking care of patients' oral health.

Together, we want to achieve better health for all, therefore a change in approach towards prevention is inevitable.

A partner in preventive oral health

As a company with decades of experience, we have contributed significantly to preventive dentistry. First, our CURAPROX brand supports health instead of fighting dental problems, such as caries or hypersensitivity. It is not against diseases, but rather for oral health. Our products have the quality and design to inspire both the dental professional and the patient about oral healthcare. Plus, no matter what our competitors are saying, we have the best interdental brushes on the market!

Secondly, no business or industry succeeds without that personal touch. Prophylaxis, whether in the dental practice or at home, needs to be more emotive. In order to encourage people to take care of their oral health, they must be emotionally invested in the cause as well.

Finally, change will only occur with proper education. As a company, we invest in knowledge-sharing and skills improvement by offering various programmes and webinars to educate dental professionals. These professionals then in turn can educate their patients.

All of this leads up to one important concept: the dentist will become one of the most important medical professionals in the future and we hope to be part of this evolution. ■