

Global Symposium by Nobel Biocare

New York, New York

Nobel Biocare has inaugurated a new convention series called Global Symposia, setting new standards for innovative professional events with top-notch scientific presentations. The first symposium was held in late June, when 1,500 internationally renowned dentists and dental technicians from 46 countries met for three days of sessions and workshops at the exclusive Waldorf Astoria hotel on New York's Park Avenue. Similar symposia are scheduled for Europe and Asia.

The traditional Park Avenue hotel has always been the preferred New York abode for monarchs and presidents alike. A popular anecdote recounts how the hotel's telephone receptionist, when a caller asked to speak to the president, politely inquired: "Which one please, Sir?" Two entire floors of this exclusive hotel had been reserved for leading implantologists from all over the world in late June – the place to be if you wanted to learn about innovative treatment concepts, new technological developments and novel approaches to treatment planning.

A scientific planning committee headed by *Dr Jonathan Ferencz*, clinical professor at the New York University College of Dentistry, had organized a slate of topics for the symposium in tune with recent approaches in dental implantology. "We set out to outline the advantages of new treatment methods for our patients", said *Ferencz*. The emphasis was on the predictability of surgical interventions, on time savings and increased patient comfort without sacrificing treatment safety, on prosthetically driven techniques and on a close interaction between the various disciplines, as well as on optimizing aesthetics

and on treatment alternatives for the edentulous jaw. The scientific presentations were accompanied by a comprehensive range of hands-on workshops and a presentation of the entire Nobel Biocare product portfolio, offering attendees an opportunity to discuss their issues directly with Nobel Biocare staff – in all major languages. Also exciting was the electronic voting option that allowed participants to communicate their level of practical experience and knowledge for each of the topics discussed – often giving rise to surprising insights. Special phone numbers had been set up to allow text messages with questions regarding the presentations to be sent; these were integrated directly into subsequent discussions.

The first day of the symposium was dedicated to success factors and predictability aspects related to immediate implant loading. Or, employing the terminology that *Dr Roland Glauser* (Zürich) prefers: "We should stop talking about immediate loading; let us talk about immediate function instead." This is the discipline where Nobel Biocare has by far the most comprehensive collection of clinical studies and long-



Domenico Scala, CEO Nobel Biocare.



The main hall of the Waldorf Astoria, not by coincidence reminiscent of the Vienna Opera.

term observations to offer, stretching back over the longest period in time. These studies address microbiological as well as mechanical factors and new findings related to implant/abutment connections and the contact area between the implant surface and the soft tissues, including but not limited to recent materials such as zirconia. A minimally invasive surgical technique is essential for success. Other predictability factors include a critical risk/benefit analysis and careful patient selection for single-tooth restorations and for the rehabilitation of partially or completely edentulous jaws. Thursday also saw a special forum held in parallel to the main podium, addressing aesthetic issues and anterior restorations as well as surgical and prosthodontic/laboratory approaches to soft- and hard-tissue deficits.

“Do not even try to cheat Mother Nature!” said *Per-Ingvar Brånemark* in a pre-recorded video message, calling upon the audience never to lose sight of the biological foundations, no matter how advanced the technology. “Dentistry and medicine are not separate disciplines but pursue the same goals: health and the protection of human life.”

New techniques in implantology and prosthodontics were presented on the second day of the symposium. Trendsetting developments in materials and surfaces as well as innovative software improve treatment planning and how to communicate with the contributing specialists – whether surgeons, periodontologists, prosthodontists or dental technicians. Nobel Biocare, having been in the vanguard of progress with NobelGuide, has now introduced two new software concepts, NobelClinician and NobelConnect, quite in keeping with the spirit of the times: All those engaged in the treatment process are interconnected from beginning to end and have access to data on each of the individual procedures. This approach unites the surgeon, prosthodontist and dental technician to form a single treatment team whose members work on equal terms – so it is hardly surprising that the results are excellent. *Jörg Strub* (Freiburg) believes that the future of computer-aided dentistry is in open all-in-one systems, complete with patient scans and a prosthetic production line. Not only does CAD/CAM have a number of economic benefits, but it also provides a new range of treatment options for complex situations.

The Friday afternoon sessions were dedicated to the treatment of edentulous patients. Different treatment approaches – All-on-4, fixed and removable rehabilitations – were presented, and speakers called for improvements in dental training in order to provide better treatment for this patient group going forward. For example, it is estimated that there are 60 million edentulous patients in China alone, which



A noble ambience at the Cipriani 5th Avenue.



Interested participants during a break.

underscores the urgent need for low-cost, minimally invasive, simple treatment concepts.

Also on Friday, attendees had a choice of three parallel sessions where specialists shared their expertise, giving the audience an opportunity to enter into a direct exchange of views on current issues, new technologies and biomaterials with leading clinicians and scientists.

Minimally invasive techniques were once again at the focus of attention of the first presentations on Saturday: implant and abutment designs, alternatives to expensive and time-consuming augmentation techniques and computer-assisted implant planning to promote atraumatic procedures wherever possible. Suspense reached new heights at the afternoon presentation where two complex clinical cases were discussed live on site, with the audience actively participating in a comprehensive course of treatment planning. The Saturday parallel session was dedicated to the laboratory, offering new technologies and planning approaches in close cooperation with the surgical and prosthodontic partners.



The Waldorf Astoria under the banner of Nobel Biocare.

And even if the “Big Apple” more closely resembled a “Baked Apple” toward the end of the event, many

participants seized the opportunity to attend the special post-symposium meeting on zygoma implants, spending their Sunday attending an exciting intensive training in the treatment of severely atrophied or edentulous jaws.

Domenico Scala, CEO of Nobel Biocare, loosely quoted *Bill Gates*: “We tend to overestimate the changes facing us in the next two years and to underestimate the changes facing us in the next ten.” The congress in New York has shown that Nobel Biocare is already planning approaches and solutions for the implantological world as it will present itself ten years from now. STE ■

An interview with Professor Hans Schmotzer, Executive Vice President for Research and Development, Nobel Biocare

Science as a basis for innovation

At the Nobel Biocare Global Symposium in New York, Marianne Steinbeck, Project Manager EDI Journal, had the opportunity to meet Professor Hans Schmotzer, Executive Vice President for Research and Development at Nobel Biocare, to discuss issues related to marketing, pricing and the public’s perception of the company.



Among the more than 1,500 participants here in New York, the German contingent is the largest. Does it feel good to experience this type of popularity after having been exposed to so much criticism?

I would say that our activities during the past two years have been sufficient to strongly and consistently refute the claim that we are paying too much attention to marketing. It was about time to start looking ahead again and to let the facts speak for themselves. Both the oral implantologist and the prosthodontist will find Nobel Biocare to be an unrivalled partner.

But there has been a price tag for this.

Our most recent decision to simplify our price structure to consist of only three easy-to-understand price levels ought to put a stop to that discussion as

well. You also need to take a close look at what you actually get for your money. Our prices have to figure in the cost of university education, our close cooperation with scientific associations all over the world and the cost of long-term studies – to say nothing of a close-knit quality control network in both the purchasing and production departments, which I consider indispensable. This commitment is directed at a single goal: to provide safety and guarantees for treatment providers and patients alike. This constitutes true added value, something that dentists should have no problem communicating to their patients. We are not talking short intervals of just a few years; we think in terms of “50 active years after 50”:

Patients who are 40 years old today should be able to live with their implant-supported restorations for a long time, so manufacturers should be able to cover the entire treatment chain. The Ti-Unite surface has been documented in clinical use and in long-term studies for more than ten years, and success rates have exceeded 98 percent. Of course we are also thinking about surface-related innovations, such as antibacterial surfaces, but innovations like that will first have to measure up to the benchmark of machined implant surfaces, the only feature for which we have true long-term results spanning more than 20 years.

Do you as a manufacturer feel unfairly judged by the public?

We would be happy if we could simply have a more scientific discussion. Long-term stability or peri-implantitis need to be stringently defined first – there are plenty of different interpretations floating around. Then after that we can and must examine the behaviour of different implant designs and surfaces following well-defined scientific criteria. It is in such an objective scientific environment that our results look best.

Does your company primarily think of itself as an implant manufacturer or as a prosthodontic company?

We do not think in terms of isolated products. We prefer to think in terms of comprehensive designs and solutions. In this manner we can cover the entire bandwidth of the existing demand, from simple to slightly more demanding treatments and all the way to high-end solutions. Incidentally, this is how we make high-quality, state-of-the-art technology more accessible for all. Just like a BMW 3 series benefits from the know-how embedded in the BMW 7 series cars.

If there is something you could wish for from our readers – what would that be?

I am an engineer first and foremost. So what I would like is for us to return to the teachings of *Brånemark* and *Albrektsson*, looking at oral implantology more from a biological, mechanical and physical angle. We should strive to perceive and comprehend oral implantology as a systematic and scientific whole – from insertion torques and primary stability all the way to bone and soft-tissue reactions and their importance for long-term stability. This and only this must be the basis for successful innovation.

Professor Schmotzer, thank you very much for this interview.