

Interview

„Beach Feeling“ in your practice

Relaxed working posture with an ergonomic treatment unit

Many dentists suffer from severe back and neck pain after just a few years of working in a dental practice: According to a study published in 2001¹, close to 90 percent of all dentists complain of back pain. In many cases, the reason for this discomfort can be traced back to a one-sided and unnatural working posture that can affect the cervical and lumbar vertebra. In order to avoid these types of physical stress, many dental professionals have been using the ergonomic treatment concept developed by Dr. Daryl Beach since the 1950s. In the interview, Dr. Rolf Saatjohann – who has a dental practice in Horstmar (Germany) – explains the advantages of the concept and how an appropriately equipped dental practice can help improve the day-to-day work.

Dr. Saatjohann, could you start out by briefly describing the day-to-day work in your dental office?

I set up my practice in Horstmar 31 years ago. Today our team includes three dentists and ten staff members. We specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of craniomandibular disorders, endodontic procedures with the use of a microscope, prophylaxis and, recently, also orthodontics.

You learned about the Beach treatment concept before opening your own practice. Can you tell us about that?

Actually I first encountered this treatment approach when I was a resident. My boss at the time had Morita's Spaceline EMCIA treatment unit in his practice, which was designed according to the Beach concept. The reason for choosing this unit primarily was a lack of space, because back then most units were very large.

¹ See: William H. M. Castro, Victor P. Meyer, Wolfgang Micheelis (2002): Nacken- und Rückenschmerzen und was sie für den Zahnarzt bedeuten.

Hence, I was able to test and familiarize myself with Dr. Beach's "12-hour treatment" concept already during my dental residency.

And the concept was so persuasive that it was a "must" when you furnished your practice?

Yes, quite simply because I could not find a more suitable treatment unit than Spaceline EMCIA. Moreover, my positive impression was confirmed by studies querying what positions were comfortable for patients, the natural range of arm movement, and the focus on basic functions. Therefore, I knew for sure that I would purchase this unit for my practice.

Why did you continue to invest in Spaceline EMCIA afterwards? Can you describe the benefits in detail?

The quality, design and associated Beach concept quite simply proved their worth. Furthermore, as the owner of a dental practice, the low "life cycle costs" also were a persuasive aspect. Bearing this in mind, it was fairly easy to decide in favor of modernized models. The feedback given by my employees and colleagues supported the decision.

What are the advantages of the other Morita treatment units installed in your practice?

You mean the ACTUS models, the predecessors of today's SIGNO G10 II series. They are perfect for prophylaxis treatments, especially when you are looking for a good-priced unit. Another advantage of ACTUS: My staff members, who usually work alone, especially when they are carrying out prophylaxis treatments, can also sit in the non-cramped 12-o'clock position, to which they are accustomed. In addition, I am glad that Morita retained the hydraulic drive in the chair of subsequent ACTUS models – SIGNO G10 II – because it is comfortable for patients. Moreover, it basically requires no maintenance or repairs and, as far as I know, it is integrated in all of Morita's treatment units. We are currently using four Spaceline EMCIA and two ACTUS units in my practice.

In your opinion, how important are the equipment and design of a practice in general as regards a successful treatment concept?

As far as the arrangement of instruments and devices is concerned, I work as follows: The instruments and actual place of treatment have to be adapted to the position of the dentist and assistant to make sure that everything is within reaching distance. None of these aspects should be viewed on their own. And the integration of the treatment unit, which must be suitable for the treatment concept, plays a significant part.

What do you recommend colleagues when they are looking for a treatment unit?

In my opinion, the utmost priority must be given to the technical reliability and one's own health. These two factors should take priority over "additional technical features", because, based on my own experience, many of these extras can be happily postponed.

What recommendations do you have regarding the ideal interior design of the treatment room?

As a rule, one should think seriously about the interior design of the practice, because if you choose wisely, you actually can save space. Moreover, I believe that treatment rooms should be furnished identically: safety is enhanced and time-saving treatment sequences are achieved if the whole team always can orient itself quickly and intuitively.

Since you have expanded the range of procedures offered in your practice to include orthodontics, you just recently acquired a new treatment unit. Why did you choose ACTUS?

Horstmar is a small rural town, and so we decided to offer orthodontic treatment to families in cooperation with a specialized orthodontic practice. Bearing this in mind, the universal applicability of ACTUS served our purpose, because ACTUS can be optimally used both for prophylaxis and orthodontic treatments.

Let us return to the Beach concept again: What positive effects do you attribute to the 12-o'clock treatment position with regard to the back discomfort frequently experienced by dentists?

Fortunately, I cannot say anything about back aches (laughs). Neither I nor my colleagues or assistants have this problem. But I do know that a significant number

of other colleagues suffer from back pain. For all those who do feel discomfort, it may be worthwhile to consider the working concept developed by Dr. Daryl Beach and, if necessary – and taking into consideration the proprioception conditions – to work as recommended by the 12-o'clock treatment concept. In order to learn about optimal working posture, I attended a Beach course in the 1980s with Dr. Wolf Neddermeyer, who, together with other instructors, still conducts these courses in cooperation with Morita.

Dr. Saatjohann, thank you very much for the interview!