

The triumphant return of IDS Cologne

By DANNY CHAN FROM COLOGNE, GERMANY

The recently concluded IDS 2001 was exactly the major-league event it had been hyped up to be.

Once again, the hallowed grounds of KölnMesse – by now, the Mecca of dental exhibitions – had become the convergent point for the largest number of participants ever assembled for a dental fair.



“Power-packed” is the word that best sums up the 29th International Dental Show held in Cologne, Germany. Not only does it depict the quantitative magnitude of this important dental event, it underscores the galvanising impact of some 1,300 suppliers and 60,000 visitors on the fair’s rousing atmosphere.

Even the dull, greyish hues that hung over the city of Cologne, a lifeless harbinger to the coming of spring, could not douse the buoyant spirits at the fair. Nor could it keep the four exhibition halls – which floor space had been expanded to 92,000 m² – from bursting with activity.

From the word “go”, the world’s largest trade fair for the dental sector kicked off on a high note. The presence of major companies, support from multi-national pavilions, strong media rapport and international clientele – assured that IDS 2001 had all the ingredients for yet another triumphant outing.

It was already making its 8th appearance at the Cologne fairground, but this time, with an added significance – as the first IDS of the new millennium.

Lights... camera... IDS!

The apparent mood at the halls was one of exuberance – boldly reflected in the fiery-red racing jumpsuits donned by marketing personnel at Voco. Themed “the Grand Prix of Innovation”, the German company’s ostentatious stand – drenched

in bright, sporty red – was definitely in the running for the most eye-catching of the lot. Then again, it was a keenly contested spot.

As always, the bigger companies did what they do best at the IDS – which is, hogging the limelight in whichever way they knew possible. Familiar names like Dentsply, KaVo, Dentaureum and Ivoclar-Vivadent took turns at the centrestage with their gigantic displays and decorated booths.

Not contented with mere product displays, some of the exhibitors even staged side-show entertainment featuring a host of costumed performers. From a distance, the likes of magicians, jugglers, mimes and animal mascots made the dental exhibition look as if it had been held hostage by circus performers.

The visual spectacle was reinforced with hands-on demonstrations as well as clinical presentations provided on jumbo-screen TVs. Surrounded by swirling cameras and elaborate lighting equipment, dentists were performing actual chairside procedures on real-life patients while being filmed and broadcasted “live” – adding a dental twist to the term “Reality TV”.

Other less gung-ho but tech-savvy dentists performed their procedures on phantom heads instead. Using advanced computer techniques, the clinical steps were simulated graphically, right down to every detailed motion, to mimic actual procedures within a virtual setting.

Press conferences well-attended

Many of the exhibitors had pre-empted their potential customers with teaser promotions, heralding the dawn of new, breaking innovations. IDS was again the premier launching pad for 'uncovering' the latest and most important innovations of the day.

For those who eagerly followed the latest trends and products on the market, there were no lack of press conferences or product launches to attend. Hosted by leading dental companies like Dürr Dental, KaVo Dental, Heraeus Kulzer, Sirona Dental Systems, Dentspy and Degussa Dental, the majority of the back-to-back conferences were well-attended and supported. Judging by the large gatherings at the press conference rooms, the efforts undertaken by the industry's movers and shakers to present their new products exclusively at IDS, were enthusiastically reciprocated.

New millennium, new innovations

As the first IDS of the new millennium, it was also fitting that innovative technology and products were



Side-show entertainment livens up the mood at the stands

categorically presented, not to mention garnering very positive results at the fair. According to the organisers' post-event assessment, whether it was CAM systems for the production of full-ceramic dental restorations or complex EDP software; advanced laser systems to refinements of minimal invasive preparation technology – there was a reported increase from all sectors in the "level of readiness to invest" in these products.

The laser technology on the erbium:YAG-basis was a good example. It was unanimously hailed as *the* innovation of IDS 2001, for its major contributions toward periodontal treatment, even for difficult cases. This new technol-

ogy stemmed from a collaborative effort between a company and a university, proving that different sectors within the dental industry can also cooperate to bear fruitful results.

In the area of instruments, the advent of sonic and ultrasonic-operated oscillating instruments, along with laser and powder-jet technology, was welcomed as the emerging trend for technical aids in the preparation of dental hard substances. It was widely noted amongst specialist camps that oscillating and miniaturised instruments were now set to revolutionise the concept of minimally invasive dentistry – in terms of promoting atraumatic and gentle handling of dental substances.

Another innovation of considerable significance is a navigation and robot system which enables pin-point placements of implants. This system is particularly effective in so-called supra constructions, where improvements were made to the connecting elements between the implant and dental prosthesis.

The hub of activity

In the midst of all that frenzied



Lights, camera, action: Real-life treatment procedures were filmed and broadcasted simultaneously.

The credentials of IDS often boil down to its effectiveness in supplying exhibitors customers who 'fit the bill'.

search for all things new and innovative, the mainstay of the exhibition still belonged to the stands – a hotbed for wheelers and dealers. This is, after all, where contracts are sealed and important relationships forged. Ultimately, whatever transpires at 'the market-place' determines the viability and longevity of the exhibition; or even of the trade fair itself.

The credentials of IDS often boil down to its effectiveness in supplying exhibitors customers who 'fit the

bill'. According to press releases supplied by the organisers, the exhibitors had reported a healthy volume of activity, and with the 'right' type of customers. An independent visitor survey conducted on behalf of co-organiser, KölnMesse, supported the notion: 91 percent of the respondents were involved in purchasing decisions, while 53 per cent of them even to a decisive extent.

Consistent and quality results

There was also a fairly proportionate mix of dentists and dental technologists represented at the fair. Twenty-nine per cent of the visitors were dental surgeons; 30 per cent were dental technicians; and 16 per cent were specialists. Probing further for opinions of the fair, the survey found that 90 per cent of the visitors were convinced that the visit to the fair had been worthwhile for them.

Eighty-seven per cent of the visitors also indicated their interest to participate in the next IDS in 2003.

It was interesting to note how the last two categories had fared as compared to the 1999 figures: the same percentage of visitors found the IDS 'worthwhile' for them; while 86 per cent (1 per cent drop) were interested in coming back for the next IDS. As far as surveys go, IDS Cologne had again demonstrated its ability to deliver quality results with a high degree of consistency. DA



Dentaureum opted for the "back-to-nature" look with an elaborate fauna display.

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