‘IDS Cologne is a global marketplace’

Interview with Dr. Martin Rickert, chairman of the Association of German Dental Manufacturers (VDDI e.V.)

By Daniel Zimmermann
Dental Tribune International

Prospects for the 33rd International Dental Show Cologne this month look promising, representatives of the German dental industry have agreed. At a recent press conference in Cologne, they also rejected fears of economic cutbacks due to the ongoing financial crisis. According to Dr. Martin Rickert, chairman of the Association of German Dental Manufacturers (VDDI e.V.), there is still a steady demand for medical and dental services. DTI Group Editor Daniel Zimmermann spoke with Dr. Rickert about the current state of the industry and his expectations for IDS Cologne 2009.

Dr. Rickert, the economic valuation of the German dental market in 2008 was fairly positive. Has this changed with the current financial crisis?

Not really. As you correctly point out, it is predominantly a financial crisis. The industry’s outlook for 2008 was good, and currently, there is a trend toward a stable return, which does not fulfill all our expectations but still promises to deliver satisfactory profits. There are certainly fluctuations in various market segments and world markets that stem from different influences and are not attributable to a single cause. There have been initial reports on redundancies in the United States. Should we be preparing for cutbacks or restructuring measures in Germany as well?

The U.S. health sector differs from that in Germany and in most European countries and, therefore, many private investors have been affected by the financial crisis. Mass redundancies in key sectors mean that many people can no longer contribute toward company health insurance schemes in the U.S. This will definitely not be the case in Germany because the statutory health insurance provider and private health insurance companies are prepared to cover the healthcare costs for their clients in the future. Even if we are in for job losses in various economic sectors, there are not likely to be any negative effects on the German health-care market.

What positive effects will IDS have on the industry?

The 33rd IDS will again exhibit a comprehensive range of modern dental products and technologies. Visitors will be able to see and experience an abundance of new product and service innovations. Technological developments in the medical field and our industry’s investment in research and development continually produce new and improved systems for dental practices and laboratories, which are of great financial interest to dentist and technician alike. ... I am confident that despite the current economic fluctuations patients will not neglect their oral health or decide not to make use of necessary care and treatment. Dental implants and automated fabrication of dental restorations are currently the fastest growing sectors in dentistry. Is this boom reflected in the products and services that are going to be presented at IDS?

Implant-borne restorations are in fact one of the fastest growing sectors, with more than 700,000 dental implants placed in Germany last year and an annual growth-rate of around 10 to 15 percent. These high-quality restorations will continue to be in demand by many patients in the future because they are one of the most progressive and long-lasting restorations available. Incidentally, the growth in dental implants in Germany can largely be attributed to the fact that the statutory health insurance scheme has subsidised this treatment since the introduction of a fixed coverage system in 2005. IDS will exhibit the entire range of modern implantology systems, presenting both innovations and developments in tried-and-tested systems.