

History of the Swiss College of Dental Medicine

The idea to establish a central Swiss College of Dental Medicine was put forward in 1998. Such Colleges, uniting groups of specialists within individual countries, have functioned well in Anglo-Saxon countries for hundreds of years. Forming a Swiss College of Dental Medicine was initially discussed during workshops preparing for an Interdisciplinary Week of Continuing Education, organised by the Swiss Dental Association (SSO). The Week of Continuing Education culminated in documenting the “Quality Guidelines in Dentistry” in 1999 in Basel.

At that time, various Swiss Dental Specialities and the Chairmen of several Swiss Dental University Departments considered it essential to coordinate the accreditation for Continuing Education Courses. This involved only the contents of the Continuing Education Courses and had nothing to do with dental politics at all. With this in mind, the Swiss College of Dental Medicine was established.

However, the Swiss Dental Association (SSO) felt confronted as being the sole representative for Swiss Dentistry. Consequently, the SSO held discussions with the founding members of the Swiss College of Dental Medicine. Soon afterwards, the Swiss Dental Association (SSO) established the “Specialisation, Continuing Education and Quality Guidelines Commission (WFQ Commission). Subsequently, the sub-commission “Continuing Education” began formulating the criteria for standardised accreditation.

The Swiss Dental Association (SSO) recognises only four specialities in Dentistry. Orthodontics was recognised as a speciality by the Swiss Dental Association in 1972. Subsequently, Oral Surgery, Periodontology and Reconstructive Dentistry were recognised as specialities. Understandably, other specialities, such as Endodontology, Paediatric Dentistry and Preventive and Restorative Dentistry felt totally let down because the Swiss Dental Association did not represent them at all.

In 2001 the Swiss Dental Association (SSO) organised an information meeting in Bern. Just prior to this meeting, the SSO and the newly **formed Medical Legal Group, Medizinalberufsgesetzgebung (MedBG)**, which was promulgated for 2005, had their own discussions. Both the SSO and the **MedBG** would recognise only four mentioned Dental Specialities. Consequently, other three speciality groups, which at that point already had well advanced speciality programmes, were left “out in the cold”. The need for a Swiss College of Dental Medicine was now acute and urgent. The Swiss College of Dental Medicine would represent all the Swiss Dental Specialities with their Specialising Programmes and acceptance of their accreditation was now the College’s primary goal.

The Swiss College of Dental Medicine was established on 20th June 2001. The first five full members included the Swiss Society for Periodontology (SSP), the Swiss Society for Endodontology (SSE), the Swiss Society of Paediatric Dentistry (SVK), the Swiss Society for Preventive and Restorative Dentistry (SVPR) and the Swiss Society for Maxillo-Facial Surgery (SKGK).

Unfortunately, the Swiss Society for Orthodontics (SKG), the Swiss Society for Oral Surgery (SSOS), the Swiss Society for Reconstructive Dentistry (SSRD), the Swiss Society for Oral Implantology (SOI) and the Swiss Society for Geriatric Dentistry (SGZBB) were reluctant to join the newly founded Swiss College of Dental Medicine.

In May 2002, the Swiss Federal Department of Health recognised the newly founded Swiss College of Dental Medicine. The Swiss Federal Department of Health recognised that the Swiss College of Dental Medicine endeavoured to work harmoniously with the Swiss Dental Association (SSO) to resolve their problems. In this spirit, the Swiss Federal Department of Health subsequently invited representatives of both the Swiss Dental Association (SSO) and the Swiss College of Dental Medicine to a “kick-off meeting”. Here, the problems arose as a result of the Bilateral Agreements between Switzerland and the EU, concerning recognition of European acquired Specialist Qualifications, particularly in Orthodontics and Oral Surgery. Consequently, the accreditation of Specialisation Programmes had to be accelerated.

The Board of Executives of the Swiss College of Dental Medicine met at regular intervals to formulate the general regulations for the accreditation of Specialisation Programmes. Guidelines were set out for Departments undertaking such Specialisation Courses, what

qualifications the respective Chairmen should have and how the accreditation procedure should progress. Each Dental Speciality prepared their own guidelines and the project was completed and handed to the Swiss Dental Association (SSO) for their perusal on 22nd may 2003.

During this time the newly designated Committee for Specialisation replaced the Committee for Continuing Education. Its main goal was to formulate the Principles for accreditation of the Specialisation programmes, which were to be used by the Organs for Accreditation and Quality Guidelines of the Federal Department of Internal affairs (OAQ of the EDI). The concepts developed by the Swiss College of Dental Medicine sufficed perfectly for this task and the Decrees for Specialisation of the Swiss Dental Association (WBO SSO) were introduced on 1st January 2005.

Based upon the Decrees for Specialisation of the Swiss Dental Association (WBO SSO) and following the self- and the external assessments, the specialisation Programme for Orthodontics, was accredited in time by the MedBG.

Specialisation in Endodontology, in Preventive and Restorative Dentistry and in Paediatric Dentistry was accepted by the Council of Delegates of the Swiss Dental Association (SSO) on 30th April 2005. With that step, a major task of the Swiss College of Dental Medicine was successfully concluded. The fact that these three Dental Specialities are accepted by the Swiss Dental Association (SSO), but not yet as Specialists by the Federal Government indicates that much still needs to be done by the Swiss College of Dental Medicine.

Since the Swiss Federal Government grants specialists licences, the Swiss College of Dental Medicine has set additional goals for itself. The uncontrolled number of Continuing Education Courses offered in no way meets the requirements of the potential participants. Marketing pressures were increasingly influencing the advertised Continuing Education Courses. It was obvious that rules and regulations were required to certify that the quality of a course fulfilled the standards set by the individual Specialities. Continuing Education Courses can be self-certified from the regulations dated 24th August 2004, described on the Homepage of the Swiss College of Dental Medicine (www.sfz.ch). From this website, presenters of continuing education courses can evaluate their type of course using Attachment A, while Attachment B lists the criteria for certification.

Using the certification criteria, the Certification Committee of the Swiss College of Dental Medicine assigns a score varying from one to four stars to the evaluated Continuing Education Course. Several national and international continuing education courses have already been certified in this way. An application form to have a course certified can be downloaded from the homepage of the Swiss College of Dental Medicine (www.sfz.ch).

During 2006, the Swiss College of Dental Medicine discussed membership with several other Swiss Dental Speciality Societies and groups. This led to the Swiss Society for Dental Treatment of Invalid and Geriatric Dentistry and to the Dental Group within the Swiss Medical Society for Hypnosis (SMSH) being integrated into the Swiss College of Dental Medicine. To date, the Swiss College of Dental Medicine acts as an umbrella organisation for six of the eleven Swiss Dental Specialities and for one Dental Subgroup.

Bern, 28th November 2005

Niklaus P. Lang
President 2001 – 2005 of the
Swiss College of Dental Medicine