

Corona pandemic and the dental practice

# What's going on in Europe?

BDIZ EDI – the European Association of Dental Implantologists – is “active in Europe” (which is one of the master slogans of the association). This is of course true in these difficult times, when dental practices across Europe—indeed worldwide—are experiencing a decline in the number of patients. We have asked for information in several countries.

The respondents answered two questions about the situation. The statements are based on the time frame end of October to mid November 2020.

- 1 What is the situation based on COVID-19 pandemic in your country?
- 2 How do dental offices get along with the pandemic situation?

## Hungary

- 1 Unfortunately, I cannot give you a very positive answer, due to the very serious second wave of COVID-19 in our country. Months ago, in March, we had about 100 new cases daily. Now, at the end of October we had (e.g. on 27 October 2020) 3200 new cases, consequently more deaths as well. We do not really have any restriction, the only one is, that in shops or malls you need to wear a mask. This is probably due to the fact that Government does not want an economical break-down.
- 2 We don't really have any special restrictions for dentistry. Obviously we realize that much less patients are visiting our practices than usual, which will lead in the long run to a worsening of the oral health and also a much more difficult financial situation of our dental teams.



**Professor Katalin Nagy, DDS, Ph.D, DSc.**  
Head of Oral Surgery, Faculty of Dentistry  
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President of the Hungarian Dental Association

## United Kingdom

**1** This COVID-19 pandemic has caused a complete disruption to life as we know it here in the UK.

**2** For the first three months starting 23 March, all dental practices in the UK were completely closed down. The UK government said they had set up nationwide centres for patients to still access care but the service was patchy and hadn't been very well through, given they knew that they were going to stop patients receiving dental care.

That situation continued and there were increasing numbers of stories in the media about the numerous patients suffering agonising toothache. Some patients even resorted to extracting their own teeth.

In July, dentistry was restarted. The financial situation for all private practices was dire as they received little or no financial support and as result a new organisation to represent these dentists was formed – the British Association of Private Dentistry. NHS practices received 80% of their normal NHS turnover from the government. Due to shortages of PPE and rising costs of providing care due to having to have a fallow period after Aerosol generating procedures, the situation for NHS dentistry looking forward appears very uncertain.

Dentistry has suffered a severe setback in our country and there is much division between all of the various interests of the differing groups.

Due to difficulty accessing NHS care, it appears as though private dentistry including implant provision is now a sector that is thriving. How long that continues will probably depend on the economy as the full impact of this crisis has yet to be fully understood in terms of the UK economy.

Currently, the implant market is stronger than ever in the UK and we hope that in spite of the wider effect on the economy our patients are placing higher value on their dentition, so hopefully they will continue to invest in the dental sector.



**Dr Eimear O'Connell, BDS**  
Principal Dentist,  
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President ADI UK

## The Netherlands

**1** The transmission of the virus is at the moment peaking, which made the government decide for a partial lockdown. Contact professions as hairdressers etc. are still able to work. Dentists are considered to be a medical contact profession, but even when the lockdown will be more strict with contact professions closed, it is not likely that dental offices have to close.

**2** However, the situation with COVID-19 also made patients more careful and there is also more illness (waiting for test results) of employees. That's why the turnover of the dental offices is around 95 % at the moment from what would have been normal.

When we monitor the transmission of COVID-19 under dentists, there seems to be no extra risk over what is seen under the normal population. There are no cases known of patients who are infected in a dental office. Before patients are allowed to come in a dental office, they have to answer questions that they have no COVID-19 (triage).

In the dental office they have to rinse with H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> or CPC for AGP procedures. We work for non-COVID-19 suspected patients with face shields and surgical masks II/R.



**Dr Jan Willem Vaartjes**  
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(Associatie Nederlandse Tandartsen, ANT)  
Chair of the Dutch Association  
for Implantology (Belangenvereniging  
Implantologie Nederlandse, BIN-EDI)

## Turkey

**1** The number of COVID-19 infections in Turkey is on the rise again. Due to the size and density of the population, Istanbul has the highest number and percentage of cases. The highest risk group for contamination is people using public transport, which is a large part of Istanbul population. Some of the public and large municipal hospitals have been converted into pandemic hospitals that only care for COVID-19 patients. Every time you visit a café, restaurant, and any public place, the temperature and symptoms are checked. There are information posters everywhere about COVID-19 and how to prevent its spread. There is also a news programme on TV about COVID-19. Furthermore, there are also many public posters about COVID-19. The Ministry of Health reports daily on the number of people infected and the ongoing fight against this pandemic. People are using face masks everywhere, and common sense about masks has meanwhile developed in Istanbul.

**2** The waiting room in our dental clinic is closed for patients or companions to protect us from cross-contamination. We only admit patients according to the concept of slow dentistry: we plan at least 60 minutes for each session. Each patient is monitored for temperature and symptoms. Before each session we disinfect and ventilate the room with HEPA- filters. In order to protect the patient's clothes and the staff's gowns from contamination and to avoid cross-contamination, both the team and the patients always wear disposable surgical gowns in the treatment room. Even if no aerosols are generated, the patient may sneeze or cough during the treatment, so we always wear an FFP3 or N95 mask and a face shield during each session, regardless of the type of treatment. Only one dentist, one dental assistant, one patient and no visitors are allowed in the room during the sessions. The room is constantly ventilated with HEPA filters. To prevent circulation in the operating theatre, no air conditioning is on operation during the aerosol-generating procedures.



**Professor Hakan Özyuvaci**  
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Member of the European Committee of BDIZ EDI

## Poland

**1** The Polish government recently declared "red covid zone" for the whole country.

**2** In the dental office, patients are scheduled in a 1 hour rhythm and they don't see each other. There is an examination for patients whether they've been in contact with the corona virus. In the treatment room there are only the dentist and two assistants, one active and one passive. Further, we use ozone and UVC, e.g., the impressions for prosthetics are treated with ozone. At the dental department of the University, the work is allowed in every other unit. For each treatment chair only 4 persons are planned, 2 of them students. All lectures and seminars are online only.



**Professor Andrzej Wojtowicz**  
Head of the Department of Oral Surgery,  
Medical University of Warsaw  
President of the OSIS-EDI  
(Polish Osseointegration Association)

## Macedonia

**1** In the republic of North Macedonia, the situation with COVID-19 pandemic is monitored on a daily basis. The number of newly found positive patients on daily basis ranges from 30–40 %. The total number of active cases is currently 12,000, 835 were hospitalized, and the total number of deaths is 1071 until today, 5 November 2020.

The hospital facilities are overcrowded and therefore, the reorganization of the university clinics and the rotation of the staff for admission of patients with COVID-19 has started (dermatology clinic, neurology, respiratory diseases and pulmonology). On the other hand, only urgent patients are admitted to the hospital, while outpatient examinations are performed normally. There have been only 5 positive cases among the health workers.

**2** Dental offices have adapted to work in pandemic conditions. Patients are admitted exclusively by appointment, using a barrier, disinfection of hands and surfaces, UV sterilization lamp for the air, protective equipment for the doctor and the assistant. The best protection is to treat all patients positive to COVID-19. For bloody interventions that use high-speed machines that produce aerosols (oral surgery interventions, ultrasound cleaning, dental preparations), patients are admitted with a negative PCR test not older than 72 hours.

For patients with confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, with urgent necessity of dental service, a new Covid Center has opened on the premises of the University Dental Clinical Center with a separate entrance and a separate office for a patient and a room for staff preparation. The protocol for preparation, operation and waste disposal is standard as required by the WHO.



**Dr Fisnik Kasapi**  
President of the Albanian Implantology Association in Macedonia



**Dr Gordana Apostolova**  
President of the Macedonian Association of oral surgeons

## Germany

**1** From 2 November to 20 December we face a partial lockdown due to high infection rates. The rates are between 0 and more than 500 infections per week among 100,000 inhabitants in different German regions. The government tries to reduce infections down to less than 50 (as it was in summer) and implements restrictions in areas with more than 200 infections.

Schools and preschools are open; hotels are open for business travellers only; restaurants and gyms are closed. Only two different households are allowed to meet at home or in public. Since chancellor Merkel wants to grant people family reunions for Christmas, the lockdown will last until Christmas and restart at New Year.

**2** Dental offices are open for patients by appointment only. The anamnesis takes place on the telephone. However, visiting the dentist remains hesitant. All kinds of dental treatment are available according to the consent between patient and dentist. Dental chambers are working to combat patients' fears.

In most dental offices, a special care has been installed: from using ventilations in the rooms to wearing PP kits and using protective means like face shields and mouth masks for both doctors and assistants, use of high- vacuum suction for aerosol- generating procedures and protective eye wear for the patients during treatment and mouth masks in the office.

Dental treatment proved to be safe, and dentists are well able to deal with infectious diseases – not only COVID-19, but also HEP and some others. In Germany, there is not a single known case of a patient being infected in a dental practice.



**Christian Berger**  
President of the BDIZ EDI  
President of the Bavarian Dental Chamber

## Portugal

**1** “The situation is very serious”. These are the words said recently by our prime minister, who, following the meeting of the council of ministers, decreed a state of emergency. In April, the country stopped, as well as all dental offices, which were one of the first places forced to close. Now, the measures are increasing, with limited circulation on the street and reduced commerce.

**2** Dental offices have taken all the necessary steps to be able to fully function. The class got together a lot to find suitable personal protective equipment. In a time of scarcity, disinfection techniques and screening of patients were improved and there was a temperature screening and monitoring of companions and appointment times. These new challenges were an opportunity to develop personal protective equipment together with local companies. It has been a real movement of enthusiasm among everyone. And therefore, we have no doubt that dental medicine in Portugal is safe and patients also feel safe, in a new reality.



**Professor António Felino**  
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**Dr Ines Pereira**  
Instructor of the faculty of oral surgery  
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## India

**1** Currently, we have close to 8.5 million cases that have been reported so far, of which 7.5 million people have recovered; while the rest have been undergoing treatment. There are close to around 50–60 thousand new cases that have been recorded every day and the death rate according to earlier has been drastically come down. We could definitely say that the COVID-curve has plateaued compared to June or July, when there was a seek of cases and on a day- to- day base, and an increase of 5–10 thousand new cases. Each day there was an increase of 5 thousand more cases.

Currently, the lockdown has opened up completely and there are no more restrictions on the use masks and social distancing. All the restaurants, hotels, gyms, lounges, pubs have all opened up. The same applies for hospitals and dental practices. As of 21 March, there was a total lockdown for 95 % of the clinics, where only emergency care was done through online consultations. Trauma cases were attended in medical hospitals by maxillofacial surgeons.

**2** Gradually, in mid May, 20 % of the clinics started opening up and by June and July, almost 80 % of the clinics private practices were open. The same went on further. Currently, by September and October, almost 95 % of the dental clinic practices have opened up.

However, the dental practices haven't been the same as before. All the elective procedures were earlier postponed by the dentists and currently, they are still being postponed by the patients. So, the elective procedures like cosmetic treatments and implants treatments are not carried out at the same frequency as earlier. A special care has been employed in most dental offices. The use of ultra violet light chambers, air purifiers with HEPA filters, the use of high ventilations in the dental offices, wearing of PP kits for both doctors and patients, the use of high- vacuum suction for aerosol generating procedures and the use of protective means i.e. face shields and mouth masks for dentists and protective eye wear for the patients, have all been incorporated to vanquish this pandemic.



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