

Business Europe



Prof. Maurizio Tonetti is the president of the Italian Society of periodontology and implantology (SIdP) and Director of the European Research Group on Periodontology (ERGOPerio).

In order to offer patients a guarantee in terms of service quality and safety standards, dentists must adopt an organisational and management model capable of ensuring that they provide their services correctly without running any risks. The first important model of this kind in Italy is promoted by the Società Italiana di Parodontologia e Implantologia (Italian society of periodontology and implantology) and entails a communication and training project called “Quality and Safety in Periodontal and Implant Surgery”. It includes a useful start-up manual, as well as conferences, and classroom and online courses. In this interview, the president of the society, Prof. Maurizio Tonetti, discusses the project, which is based on the adoption of a tailor-made checklist for dental surgery in accordance with World Health Organization measures for operations in other medical fields.

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Error-proof checklist for oral surgery to reduce risks

Prof. Tonetti, what does the checklist comprise, and why did you decide to apply this model to dental procedures?

Data from Tribunale dei diritti del malato (patients’ rights courts) reveals that dental surgery has the fifth highest risk of complications. This is rather surprising, as dental procedures are very effective and predictable. From this finding, the idea arose of a tailor-made checklist for dental surgery consisting of 35 items to encode the procedures for planning, preparing and performing an operation and managing the post-operative phase to eliminate the risk of important aspects being forgotten or overlooked, with serious consequences to the health of the patient and potentially leading to legal disputes.

It is a work method that has been applied successfully in other fields, by pilots for example, and is already used in the hospital environment.

That’s right, but this is the first time that a checklist has been tailor-made for dentistry to ensure that patients receive the best possible care and that risks are reduced to a minimum. In this way, the improved organisation and training of the dentist’s office and staff can reduce the number of errors made without any increase in cost.

Could you give us an example?

The method entails checking and preparation for surgical procedures, including the instruments, devices and operators, and encoding of tried-and-tested procedures for all operations. Let’s take, for example, an aspect that is sometimes underestimated, but is actually no less important than others: the procedures for controlling the risk of cross-infection, thereby guaranteeing the patient’s safety by organising and preparing everything necessary to ensure that the operation is performed as efficiently as possible, such as the organisation of the instruments. These steps are to be done before the operation is performed and preferably following standardised procedures. For example, nearly all operations performed today require the use of electrical medical equipment and specific instruments. It is thus important to prepare checklists that include the instruments necessary for the type of operation to be performed. The adoption of special kits of surgical instruments in which the instruments are housed and organised in cassettes may be extremely helpful and increase the efficiency of this phase, the subsequent surgical phases, and the sterilisation and replacement of the instruments under conditions of maximum safety.

How do you communicate this message of professionalism, safety and quality to your patients?

One of the objectives of the project is to offer all our colleagues the opportunity to join the quality and safety programme, undertaking to apply the checklist to all operations performed on all of their patients.

Once their approach has been approved, those who join will receive a certificate demonstrating their commitment and their names will appear on a list that can be consulted by patients. We are confident that our patients will fully comprehend the professional skills associated with these services and will appreciate the benefits of Italian dentistry even more.

The aim of the project is to give information to the 59,000 dentists operating in Italy and to organise over 100 free courses for the 18,000 dentists that perform periodontal or implant surgery. Are you considering exporting this model to other countries?

Italian dentists are among the best in the world, and periodontal and implant surgery performed under optimum conditions is highly effective and can improve the lives of a substantial number of patients. Italy is therefore an initial experiment. Many European countries have been observing our project closely, and I believe that we will be launching and supporting similar projects in other countries before long. As Italian dentists, we can certainly be proud of it; it will help to enhance the already positive image of Italian dentistry, which lends itself to exportation so well.

Checklist for the surgical environment
"ABCDEF", a mnemonic aid to staff going through the checklist:
A = Apparatus: electrical medical equipment, adequately prepared
B = Biomaterials: implants
C = Cassette: sterile surgical box containing the complete set of instruments (kit)
D = Diary: the patient's clinical diary
E = Examinations: diagnostic devices, available and visible
F = Farmaceutics: and up-to-date emergency equipment (in compliance with the relevant local recommendations)

Be organised and be safe

