

Confidence beyond immediacy

At Straumann's "Arena of Confidence" booth at IDS 2019, the spotlight will be on the recently introduced Straumann BLX, a fully tapered immediate implant system that fills the gap in the company's premium portfolio and aims to win significant share in this segment. *implants* spoke with Dr George Raeber, Head of Global Product Management SDIS, to find out more.

Dr Raeber, Straumann's new BLX implant is said to be a game changer. What makes it so unique?

In essence, it is a unique combination of three elements: advanced implant geometry, prosthetic simplicity, and the consequent application of our legendary technol-



ogies, Roxolid and SLActive. The implant geometry allows for dynamic bone management. It is designed to cut bone where necessary and to redistribute and condense this native bone into less dense areas. This has two clinically highly relevant benefits: optimised primary stability in all types of bone and very high bone-to-implant contact directly after placement. The hybrid connection offers the benefit of only one connection and, hence, one abutment and auxiliary line for all major implant diameters. This reduces the system's complexity and inventory for our customers, allowing them to achieve good aesthetic results. Finally, the stronger material Roxolid and the SLActive surface provide clinicians with the confidence to aim for the best possible treatment even in the most challenging clinical situations. The de-

velopment of Straumann BLX is based on clinical experiences and technological advancements in implant dentistry of the last ten to 15 years.

Considering the already large and successful portfolio, why did Straumann choose to add yet another product line, and with such a specific focus?

Immediacy protocols are a common wish of more and more clinicians. In addition, they are also driven by patient demand. Many of our customers already successfully apply immediacy protocols with Straumann implants today, for example with the BLT. However, we realised that some customers prefer fully tapered self-cutting implants. Hence, we set out to develop a next-generation product within this class to respond to these requests. Right from the start, we took great care in creating a flexible system that can also be used in healed sites and, of course, with conventional loading protocols. The feedback that we have received so far from clinical users is very positive, particularly in this regard. It clearly demonstrates that we have designed a highly versatile system that has been perfected for the use in immediacy procedures, but also excellent for all other indications.

Is the new BLX an implant made mainly for highly skilled specialist surgeons?

No, it is not. The implant was designed for the use in both simple and complex clinical situations. In other words, it is the clinical procedure that may require a high level of experience and not the product that is used therein. For instance, immediate procedures often require a lot of experience and should therefore be performed by skilled surgeons rather than dentists who are just taking their first steps in the field of implant dentistry. That being said, BLX might be the ideal system for clinicians who plan on venturing into more complex procedures, as it is relatively easy to use. The implant shape, in combination with the simple drilling procedure, results in implant placement being distinctly forgiving. The development team managed to create an implant with very good self-cutting properties, but that follows the intended trajectory in a very controllable way.

How did Straumann make sure that its first specific implant for immediate procedures was at the top of the game from the very beginning?

We involve experts and run customer panels in order to understand market trends and needs when developing a new Straumann product. In this particular case, we wanted to look at radical new ideas, which is why we chose to work with one of the world's leading specialists when it



comes to designing implants for immediacy protocols: Dr Ophir Fromovich. This became and continues to be a very exciting and beneficial collaboration. Combining his innovativeness and clinical knowledge of and experience in implant designs specifically made for immediate loading with our clinically proven technologies, precision engineering and highest development standards enabled us to create what we believe to be an extraordinary system.

In addition, we naturally went the typical Straumann way of developing new products. When we develop a new implant, it has to deliver and it has to be safe from day one. In a second stage, we therefore took the time to involve specialists, general practitioners, Straumann customers and implantologists who predominantly use competing brands. In total, over 100 clinicians have been working with BLX and they have specifically documented the performance of the new implant in their daily practice setting. The feedback we got from that was very positive. It confirmed what we had seen in preclinical studies: excellent primary stability and bone maintenance combined with the high versatility of the BLX system. Moreover, several controlled clinical trials are running for specific indications. Therefore, an impressive amount of clinical data will be available when the commercialisation of Straumann's BLX starts. We prefer launching a new product commercially only after it has been meticulously tested.

Apart from the good performance in all bone types, what benefits does the new implant offer Straumann's customers?

We've put a lot of thought into creating a system that is able to preserve as much of the natural tissue and is as minimally invasive as possible. Firstly, I would like to mention the significant clinical benefit that Roxolid offers in this regard. The stronger material enabled the developers to design a 3.75mm BLX implant, which is already indicated for all tooth positions. We tried it with titanium, which is commonly

used, but it did not work. A smaller implant preserves more of the natural tissue and reduces the invasiveness of the procedure because augmentations can be avoided. It also gives the clinician greater flexibility in placing the implant. Secondly, I would like to mention the shortened, low-temperature drill protocol. This was made possible thanks to the new Velodrills, which were specifically designed for the BLX system. VeloDrills will soon be available for our other implant lines as well. VeloDrills reduce the heat generated during the drilling process through an innovative new surface, as well as a very specific new cutting geometry. The difference is astounding. Using this technology in the context of guided surgery, clinicians can switch directly from the pilot drill to the final drill without overheating the bone, maintaining ideal conditions for reliable osseointegration. Lastly, but nonetheless importantly, I would like to highlight the biologically driven prosthetic design concept of BLX. Owing to the new TorcFit connection, we were able to design slim and under-contoured abutments. This makes it possible to preserve more soft-tissue volume, which supports predictable aesthetic outcomes.

How do you believe BLX is able to support dentists in today's competitive environment?

What I have observed is that dentists are facing increasing and often conflicting patient demands. Today, patients are demanding perfectly aesthetic and long-lasting tooth replacements, with fewer visits. Hence, digitally enhanced workflows, which translate to shorter chair times, in combination with a highly reliable implant system that allows clinicians to treat even advanced cases with confidence, are key in order to stay competitive. This is exactly what we aim to offer with BLX. The system has been developed to make efficient workflows driven by immediacy protocols predictable and manageable. Furthermore, BLX is embedded in Straumann's powerful and growing digital ecosystem, which gives our customers the possibility of optimising their value chain. Based on all this, we believe that BLX can support our customers in creating new business opportunities and strengthening their position in today's competitive environment.

When and where will BLX be available?

In April, BLX will be launched on the European market. The US and other regions will follow later in the year.

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