

Dental care in Flanders faced with huge challenges

Benedenti aims to expand the multidisciplinary group practice model throughout Flanders

Herentals-Antwerp, 16 December 2015, 7:30 AM CET - Dental care in Flanders will be facing some huge challenges over the next few years: the current cohort of practising dentists is rapidly approaching retirement age, there is an insufficient influx of new graduates ready to enter professional practice, and the field of dentistry is undergoing numerous technological and scientific developments. Moreover, the demands imposed by patients, young dentists and society in general have evolved considerably. Benedenti, one of the leading multidisciplinary group practices in Flanders, aims to respond to these trends by gradually introducing its vision and concept to Flanders. To realise this ambition, Benedenti has the backing of investment company Gimv. The resources provided by Gimv will be used by Benedenti to conclude further partnerships with other dental practices, develop new group practices and continue to invest in the newest technology.

Pivotal moment for dental care in Flanders

“Dental care in Flanders is facing some huge challenges. There could be no better time than the present to question our current way of working”, says Rik Claes, founder of Benedenti and still active as a dentist, particularly in the fields of periodontology and implantology.

1. Dramatic shortage of dentists

Dental care in Flanders is currently on the verge of a pivotal moment: a generational turnover has been initiated. Sixty-four per cent of all Flemish dentists are above the age of fifty. Additionally, there is a dramatic shortage of dental students ready to enter into practice. Only eighty students graduate in the field of dentistry every year, on average. This is partly due to the mandatory entrance exams. A substantial number of these will continue as a specialist, while five to ten per cent are foreign students who will be returning to their home countries once they have graduated. These aspects combined are causing the per capita number of dentists to diminish substantially. *“The current cohort of dentists is rapidly approaching retirement age. Additionally, the younger generation of dentists demands a certain degree of flexibility and a good work-life balance”,* continues Claes. *“These are all factors that we as a sector need to take into account”.*

2. Patients’ changing expectations and the rise of new technology

“We have noted that the modern patient wants a model in which all forms of treatment can be obtained under one and the same roof: from prevention to specialised care”. Claes further clarifies his vision: *“The modern patient also expects high-quality service, supported by the latest technology. And he or she wants all of this at an affordable price, with transparent invoicing”.* New innovative technology, such as intra-oral scanning, 3D radiology, 3D printing and all manner of CAD/CAM systems are expensive investments that can hardly be borne by individual dentists, but are feasible when made by a group practice.

Added value of supporting staff

Rik Claes and his team aim to respond to these challenges through the further expansion of Benedenti. The approach to dentistry in other countries, such as Great Britain and the Netherlands, serves as an example to Claes. *“Over the course of the past few years I have taken many dentistry courses in the Netherlands, where the dentistry is placed in an entirely different setting and the supporting staff provides tremendous added value. Additionally, team practices offering all specialist*

treatments under one roof were more the rule than the exception even then. Having various specialist fields in one team raises the level of efficiency of a practice substantially. This way, you can always be assured of having a specialist on call for every problem. Also, by centralising all supporting tasks and services (such as invoicing, purchasing and streamlining chairside, reception and dental assistance) through a single practice manager, the dentists will be able to concentrate exclusively on what they do best: giving every patient the best dental care available”.

The necessity of organisation, consolidation and further professionalism

Gimv will acquire a substantial interest in Benedenti and make the necessary resources available to ensure its further growth. *“Thanks to Gimv’s contribution, the further growth of Benedenti in Flanders will be guaranteed. We and our partners will use the fresh capital to further expand our organisational structure and group, develop new group practices and continue to invest in the latest technology”*, affirms Rik Claes.

Dr Peter Byloos, Partner in the Gimv Health & Care team, shares his opinion on Benedenti: *“Spreading and further professionalising the modern multidisciplinary group practice model is crucial if we aim to continue to provide people with affordable and high-quality prevention and dental care. Rik Claes has always played a pioneering role in this. Benedenti is the epitome of a professional organisation, a strong business culture with dedicated dentists and staff who are supported by experienced practice managers. This approach enables dentists to concentrate exclusively on the medical aspect”.*

Gimv has a team of specialists in the field of healthcare which acknowledges the challenges for Flanders’ care system. Gimv invests in mature healthcare and innovative concepts in the care sector through its Health & Care fund. Following investments in the Netherlands and France, Gimv is very pleased to announce its first investment in Flanders. *“Gimv has a long history as a strategic partner for businesses with a clear focus on growth, professionalism and value creation and we will be happy to support Benedenti’s ambition to further develop modern multidisciplinary dental care throughout Flanders”*, concludes Bart Diels, Managing Partner of Gimv Health & Care.

*** End of press release ***

About Benedenti

Benedenti is one of the leading multidisciplinary group practices in Flanders. Its branches in Herentals, Berlaar and Vlimmeren provide dental care and treatment to thousands of patients every year. Benedenti employs a staff of 48, of which 16 are dentists, each of whom is a specialist in a particular field of dentistry. Benedenti was founded in 1985 when Rik Claes and his wife Griet Luyten started their own dental practice in Herentals. Over the course of several years, the practice expanded into a big group practice: ‘Benedenti Herentals’. 2007 saw the addition of Annemie Tolleneer’s dental practice, which became ‘Benedenti Berlaar’. A third practice was founded in November of 2015, ‘Benedenti Vlimmeren’. Rik Claes and Griet Luyten’s two children, Dries and Marjan, dentists since 2010, are also now actively involved in the management and growth of Benedenti.

Additionally, Rik Claes and his team are the catalysts behind 'Dental Mission', a dental health project in the Philippines for which they and colleagues from other practices travel to the Philippines to volunteer their dental and oral care services.

About Gimv

Gimv is a European investment company with over three decades experience in private equity and venture capital. The company is listed on Euronext Brussels. Gimv currently manages around 1.8 billion EUR (including co-investment partnerships) of investments in about 50 portfolio companies. As a recognized market leader in selected investment platforms, Gimv identifies entrepreneurial and innovative companies with high-growth potential and supports them in their transformation into market leaders and establishing long term success. Gimv's four investment platforms are: Connected Consumer, Health & Care, Smart Industries and Sustainable Cities. Each of these platforms works with a skilled and dedicated team across Gimv's home markets of the Benelux, France and Germany and can count on an extended international network of experts. More information on www.gimv.com.

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