



INTERVIEW

DENT ESTET THE FUTURE OF DENTISTRY IS WITHIN DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

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1. The global economy seems to experience challenges we have not seen in decades: very high inflation, the prospects of synchronized recession, higher and higher interest rates, and even war. In this context, how do you deal with such challenges in your business sector?

It is true that in recent years we faced challenges that influenced the economic dynamics at national, European, and global levels, with social, financial and human effects. However, I think that these experiences lived during the pandemic have influenced Romanians to give increased attention to their health, but also to their loved one's health, and therefore accessing dental services was among their priorities. People have realized that dental care is one of the conditions to enjoy overall good health. Thus, more and more Romanians have chosen DENT ESTET, the established leader in the dental medicine market, in order to enjoy premium dental treatments, digital dentistry benefits and the expertise of a multidisciplinary team of doctors with training in all branches of dentistry. In this context, our teams have

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adapted to these new requirements and DENT ESTET continued to invest heavily in digitalization and new technologies, to ensure that in this way we can meet the needs of our patients, who are increasingly informed and choose to entrust their oral health to the clinics that can offer them premium dental services.

For DENT ESTET, 2021 and 2022 were two years of strong expansion at a national level, because we wanted to offer quality services to as many Romanians as possible. In this way, we managed to register growth in all business divisions, with a strong focus on the complex cases segment, but also the one dedicated to children and teenagers.

Taking into account the current uncertain context, we will continue to have a balanced strategy from a business perspective, focusing on the level of services offered to our patients, which will be the same in all 17 clinics in Bucharest, Sibiu, Timisoara, Brasov, Cluj-Napoca, Oradea, Ploiesti, Craiova and Arad (the last clinic opened), but also on the prevention area. Here, there are many things to do taking into account the fact that data shows that 40% of Romanians go to the dentist less often than once a year or just when needed. In addition, at a national level, dental medicine receives only 0.33% of the budget allocated to social insurance, according to data presented by CNAS, although in Romania the incidence of dental caries is 99%. In this context, we believe that it is necessary to concentrate the efforts of both private and public sectors in order for Romanians to receive the dental services they need, as it happens in other countries in Europe or in the world.

2. 2021 was a very good year for DENT ESTET after an organic and significant territorial expansion. What were the extensions of 2021 results in 2022?

2021 was the year with the largest territorial expansion for DENT ESTET, the group increasing its portfolio with 3 clinics, in Ploiesti, Cluj-Napoca and Oradea. The extension targeted in particular the Transylvanian area, DENT ESTET signing a partnership with the Stomestet clinic in Cluj and taking over the majority package of the Oradent by

Dr. Costea clinic, in Oradea. Another major investment, worth 1.7 million euros, was allocated to a premium clinic in Ploiesti with all-in-one dental services dedicated to adults, children, and teenagers. All our efforts to reach more cities, as well as investing in digital dentistry, have resulted in a sustained pace of development. The group's turnover registered a significant increase compared to 2020, up to the value of 107.6 million RON, which strengthened our position as a market leader. In 2022, we continued this dynamic expansion strategy and opened, at the beginning of the year, a new clinic in Craiova and, a short time ago, we have announced the opening of the 17th clinic within the group, in Arad.

This expansion was also supported by an increase in the number of patients and the demand for complex treatments with dental implants, orthodontic treatments and dental aesthetic services, which are also the main segments of development in these years. The oral rehabilitation segment, for example, has seen significant increases, mainly due to the unparalleled expertise of our team of doctors, but also to the investments in safety measures and digitalization. In addition, the premium dental services provided to the corporate sector represented a focus in our activity, because we want all patients to enjoy the benefits of access to state-of-the-art technology, the overspecialization of the medical team, and dedicated prevention programs.

Now, we are proud to have a portfolio of 17 multidisciplinary dental clinics in 9 cities in the country, which bring together a number of 105 treatment rooms equipped to hi-tech standards, 9 fully digitized imaging and radiology centers, and 7 offices dedicated to patients who need the support of a psychologist to be able to undergo dental treatment.

3. This year, DENT ESTET arrived in two new cities, Craiova and Arad. Why did you choose to expand into these cities and what are your plans for next year?

In Craiova, we opened the largest clinic within the group, after an investment of approximately 1.5 million euros. The new multidisciplinary clinic is

equipped with 12 modern dental offices, 8 dedicated to adults and 4 to children and teenagers. Because we set out to strengthen our position in the central region of the country, we decided to open a new clinic in Arad as well, the available specializations being implantology, orthodontics, periodontology, endodontics, laser dentistry and dental aesthetics.

Within these two new clinics, patients have access to integrated digital dentistry and diagnostic and treatment solutions at European standards offered by 30 dentists with international certifications. As in all other cities, the patients can benefit from our doctor's expertise within the DENT ESTET Clinics in Bucharest, thanks to the culture of sharing and mentoring, which provides access to the experience we have gained in 23 years of activity.

Further, we are ready to support as many Romanians as possible with complete diagnostic and treatment solutions to help increase people's oral health. As far as the development strategy is concerned, we will look at the opportunities that exist according to the current economic dynamics in order to make the best decisions in the medium and long term.

4. How did the perception of the pandemic in 2022 affect your business regarding people returning to dentistry services?

As I said, the pandemic has prompted us all to take better care of our health. A study conducted in April by MedLife, the leader of the private medical services market in Romania, of which DENT ESTET is also a part, revealed that despite the reduction of the impact curve of the pandemic and the increasing geo-political threats in the region, 68% of Romanians consider that is very important to take care of their own health. At the same time, 79% of respondents said that their family's health is very important to them. We have always encouraged patients to approach dental care from a prevention perspective, and we have seen improvements in this regard. Also, the constant pressure felt in recent years has led to increased attention in terms of the level of dental services received, and our patients felt that we are by their side step by step.

Nowadays, more and more Romanians are thoroughly informed before choosing the medical team to whom to entrust their smile. People want painless treatments, a high level of comfort in the dental office, empathy and professionalism from

the medical team, but also long-term results guaranteed by the high-performance equipment and materials currently on the market.

5. What were the trends in patient experience for 2022? Was it about improving customers' experience? About payment options? About something else?

It is obvious that the pandemic has acted as a catalyst for digitalization, an aspect also reflected in DENT ESTET dental clinics. We have focused on transforming the patient digital experience and investing in the latest diagnostic, treatment and dental technology to increase the accuracy and effectiveness of treatment plans. One of our promises to patients is to respect their wishes and expectations so that each treatment plan is personalized and meets the most demanding quality and safety requirements.

When new technologies are capitalized on by dentists with expertise in implantology, periodontology, orthodontics or pediatric dentistry, the patient experience is greatly improved. He will enjoy increased accuracy in diagnosis, reduced pain and speed in the execution of prosthetic works. Another advantage offered by digitalization is the lowering of dental treatment costs. It is an important aspect taking into account the fact that, often, the lack of financial resources can be a reason for not going to the dentist regularly, with undesirable effects on our oral health.

At the same time, our focus was also on creating a close relationship between the doctor and the patient, so that he feels listened, respected and that he is actively participating in the decision-making process. We want each patient to feel that they are the hero of their own journey to the much-desired smile. At DENT ESTET, we are the promoters of digital dentistry benefits and transform the way the visit to the dentist is perceived. We want, at the end of the treatment, each patient to feel that his natural smile reflects his well-being and inner beauty.

6. What are the trends in dentistry? What do you expect for 2023?

Due to technological progress in all fields, digitalization is also a strategic direction for DENT ESTET. In our clinics, traditional dentistry has long been replaced by digital dentistry, which drives us to go beyond our limits and offer the best treatment solutions for our patients.

We set out to be pioneers of digital transformation in Romanian dentistry, so we have equipped all clinics with the latest technology. One of these technologies is the MODJAW scanner, which offers a unique experience. With the help of this high-performance scanner, the dentist digitally records the functional movements of the jaws and creates a digital “clone” of the dental-maxillary apparatus. This technology is used to increase the effectiveness of treatment plans so that the results are those desired by the patient.

Also, dental laser treatments are a trend at the moment. The laser is minimally invasive and selectively removes the affected dental tissues, keeping more of the dental structure healthy. In addition, using the laser, a dentist can eliminate caries much more accurately than with a regular dental cutter. Laser treatments are currently used in all branches of dentistry to treat numerous dental problems, such as periodontal disease, and dental caries, but also in aesthetic interventions.

7. We live in a world where machines can take precise imaging scans and even complete complex surgical procedures. What is the pace of the adoption of new technologies in dental care in Romania?

I believe that the pace of the adoption of technology has increased, but we can say that the efforts are concentrated in a relatively small number of dental clinics, generally being companies from the Top 20 dental clinics in Romania, which have an important turnover and have a modern approach to dentistry. Unfortunately, in Romania, the dental market continues to be highly fragmented. According to official data, in 2021, there were more than 16,000 independent dental offices, with the average number of residents per office being 1,100. It is easy to understand that those offices that have only 1-2 dental units cannot have an accelerated pace of adoption of digital technology. So, we can say that at a national level, many Romanians cannot benefit from modern diagnostic and treatment equipment and techniques.

However, through our activity within the Dental Office Managers Association (ADOM), part of DENT ESTET group, we have noticed an increase in the interest of dentists and dental clinic managers to invest in digitalization. ADOM is a leader in the field of dental clinic management and this has helped us to see if there are any changes in the way patient management is approached in our country.

From this point of view, we can say that we have noticed, in the last two years, with the pandemic, a visible increase in the desire of doctors to streamline their dental offices and clinics and to turn them into businesses that develop healthily, for the benefit of patients. And one of the directions is the constant investment in new technologies that improve the patient experience and help them enjoy excellent long-term results regarding their dental health.

8. It is not uncommon for adults to postpone treatments due to an ability to pay or simply because they think they do not need treatment. How do you fight such beliefs?

Through our campaigns that aimed the education of children and adults, but also through involvement in vulnerable communities, thanks to partnerships that we have had for many years with organizations such as “Salvați Copiii”, Ajungem Mari Association or Magic Association.

As doctors, we believe that it is our duty to inform adults that regular visits to the dentist are the best solution to enjoying good oral health. Postponing dental treatments means aggravating the dental problems we are facing, taking into account that tooth decay can advance rapidly in both children and adults, and an uncorrected dental malocclusion also has serious consequences on the general state of health.

In addition, we must not forget that any postponement of dental treatments can lead to additional costs, which can strongly affect the family budget, but also to a greater number of visits to the dentist.

We, at DENT ESTET 4 KIDS, have assumed the role of educating children regarding the importance of oral hygiene in maintaining good oral health, and implicitly of the whole body. Over time, we have been involved in numerous social responsibility projects, such as the “Visiting the Tooth Fairy” program or the collaboration of over 10 years with “Salvați Copiii”, an organization that is involved in the development of educational programs that guarantee equal access to education for children from vulnerable groups. Also, last year, we signed a partnership with the Magic Association, through which DENT ESTET 4 Kids doctors, specially trained to work with children who need more time to adapt to the dentist, offer complex dental consultations and specialized dental treatments to

children who face special situations and who need any support to maintain their health.

9. What about this business line dedicated to pediatric dentistry – DENT ESTET 4 Kids clinics? What are the plans for 2023?

Indeed, DENT ESTET 4 Kids clinics are an important line of business for us. We introduced this unique concept for the first time on the dental market in Romania in 2008, and since then we have grown a lot. Currently, we have 4 clinics dedicated exclusively to children (2 in Bucharest, 1 in Sibiu, and 1 in Timisoara), two dedicated exclusively to teenagers (DENT ESTET 4 TEENS in Bucharest and Timisoara), but also we offer services dedicated to children and adolescents in other clinics opened in Ploiesti, Craiova or Arad.

The experience accumulated in these 14 years of activity, shows us that more and more parents have understood why it is good to take care of their children’s teeth immediately after their appearance. As a consequence, the number of our patients has increased year to year.

In addition, as I already said, the segment dedicated to orthodontic treatments has grown lately, due to the preference of patients, be they teenagers or

adults, for dental aligners, those invisible orthodontic appliances, which provide increased comfort for those who do not feel comfortable with braces and want to achieve quick results in terms of tooth alignment.

In the future, we will continue to bring these services dedicated exclusively to children in as many cities in the country as possible because we want to contribute to the healthy development of the new generations and to be close to parents interested in providing their children with the best oral care.

10. As a leader in business, you become proud when you make your customers/patients smile. Personally, what makes you smile?

Smiling is part of my life by the nature of my activity and I enjoy every new experience with my team, which has evolved with each new challenge and grown as a family. I enjoy every smile transformed, but also the words of the patients who tell me that their lives changed when they chose DENT ESTET. I find resources and inspiration in the moments spent with my children, Maria and Carol, in their successes in life, and I am glad to go through this journey with my husband, Cristian Taban.