“Advanced knowledge and a supporting community via the Internet”

An interview with Dr Mikko Nyman, developer of new dental consultation portal QAdental

By Benito Gründer, DTI

In November, QAdental won the Innovation Award at the Finnish Dental Congress and Exhibition in Helsinki. Developed by Dr Mikko Nyman and Teddy Grenman, Chief Dentist and Chief Engineer at NUOVO NORDIC Healthcare Services, respectively, the platform offers dental professionals the opportunity to e-consult with dental specialists, serves as a database for learning material and patient cases, and enables forum discussions. Dental Tribune spoke with Nyman about this pioneering solution and the expertise it brings to remote areas and developing countries.

Congratulations on winning the award. How did this come about?

This has been quite a year. We piloted QAdental in Namibia this spring. It wasn’t easy to obtain permission from the local ministry of health and it wasn’t easy to get people excited about something totally new. We visited the country twice. However, we managed to conduct the pilot successfully.

Did you have a team to support you in the development process?

QAdental was developed by a team. Teddy Grenman and I were the main architects, but without the rest of the team—CEO Jani Korpela, Chief Medical Officer Jarkko Saramäki and Project Coordinator Teemu Tanninen—we wouldn’t have been able to conduct the pilot successfully in Namibia. Steve Jobs’s famous quote applies to QAdental also. “Great things in business are never done by one person. They’re done by a team of people.”

Did you expect to win the award?

We knew that big Finnish players such as Planmeca and Hammaslaine would take part in the contest with their new, innovative products, but we were quite sure that there were not many service providers who would be taking part, so we made the decision to participate in the contest. Certainly, we didn’t expect to win. We didn’t even have any marketing material ready. We built QAdental based on the [Eric Ries’s] lean start-up principles. Validated learning was and will be the base for our development process.

How do the features of QAdental help practitioners in particular?

In Finland and many other countries, specialist services are not available in remote areas. This means dental professionals located there are obliged to work beyond their scope. QAdental brings them advanced knowledge and a supporting community via the Internet. This way, clinicians can perform more challenging procedures more safely and discuss patient cases with their peers. The growing international database of questions and answers and learning material is available for all members. With the help of the advanced search function—or maybe artificial intelligence in the near future—clinicians may find answers to their questions from previous questions and answers.

What sets QAdental apart from other dental community platforms?

This kind of consultation or support service might be very significant in enhancing patient safety and healthcare quality. Our plan was to export Finnish or Western expertise to developing countries. One challenge was that these countries cannot afford to pay for Western dental specialist consultation. That’s why we wanted to develop a way to share the knowledge. The solution was quite obvious: we had to create a place where all consultations, answers and learning material are available for all members so that the learning experience wouldn’t be limited to one person.

During the pilot project, we learnt that there’s a need for specialist e-consultations also in Finland, especially in remote areas. In Finland, there’s no tele-consulting platform where information and learning experiences are shared with several practitioners at the same time, so QAdental serves as a kind of reverse innovation when it comes to Western countries. Compared with other dental forums, QAdental focuses solely on consultation and learning material. There’s always a dentist on duty, taking care of maintenance, and to make sure that the appropriate QAdental professional answers to the corresponding consultations. The officer on duty is also the quality controller when it comes to official answers.

Will your product be globally available?

QAdental is open to all dental professionals globally and membership is free. Dentists can register at www.qadental.com.

Thank you very much for the interview.