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ClearPath aligner makes smiles brighter

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Singapore: Be it the low cost benefit or the vast gene pool, the Asian market has for many years been able to, lure the life sciences industry, either to launch their products or seek manufacturing and R&D help from the country. India, in specific, holds great promise for companies that have come up with break- through technologies as the market that can reap the benefits as the products shoot up dramatically, as compared to any other country.

Keeping this in mind, when ClearPath Orthodontics launched their path breaking 3D aligners product in the country around three years back, little did they know that the technology would create waves in the market. For the first few years, the company's founders invested time in boosting the awareness and popularity of the product through unending brainstorming sessions with dentists across the country.
They aimed at making the breakthrough technology avail- able for Indians as a sophisticated and technologically advanced substitute for braces, which has been enjoying success in the US for the last three decades.

ClearPath Orthodontics, with its headquarters in the US, started off their Indian chapter in December 2007. The pilot project that started with merely two people has managed to get over 800 qualified ClearPath practitioners from across the country. Furthermore, the team of two has today become a team of 20 well trained dentists who manage the show when it comes to assisting other practitioners in understanding the product. ClearPath's product, the 3D aligners, have been introduced in India for the first time. The technology is available with only two players across the world and ClearPath is one of them.

Dr Ataat Khan, the CEO and founder of ClearPath, explained that the product has been leveraging the aligners market in Bangalore specifically by 15 percent every month. "This has increased by 500 percent in the last one year. Increasing consumer awareness for oral health, rising per capita income and expanding urban population are all factors influencing the dynamics of global dental industry. Charting the growth In its first year of operations in India, the company man- aged to get about 150 cases. In a matter of 12 months soon after, ClearPath's clientele went up by almost three times. This has been the trend for the company over the last three years.

Speaking of the hardship faced with the launch of the product, Dr Khan said, "The first year was the most challenging one for us. This was a new technology for Indian doctors. An aligner is a custom-made clear plastic tray that moves teeth. These aligners are removable, custom made appliances which should fit snugly on patient's teeth. We developed this with more than seven years of experience and intensive R&D before commercial use. But for Indian dentists, who have been moving teeth with wires, using plastic was a very surprising aspect. Fortunately we were able to prove our stance with some cases studies from the US."

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"Each aligner moves teeth a little bit at a time and eventually our patient can have straight teeth. Hence a series of aligners are required to correct the malocclusion. Each aligner has got a small amount of movement for selected teeth. When the aligner is inserted in to a patient's mouth, plastic applies pressure on teeth; this pressure will gradually shift and guide these teeth into the alignment dictated by the shape of the aligner. Then next aligner is inserted and depending on the case, anywhere between ten to 40 aligners could be used," he said.

"Of the few benefits of this technology are its predictability as it can accurately show the results of treatment and exact number of aligners even before the treatment starts. Only one impression is required in the beginning and only ten minutes of chair side time required per six weeks per patient." Dr Khan added.

Also it is highly precise, automated and a sophisticated procedure that can treat all varieties of cases, including extraction cases, crossbites, rotations, edge to edge, bi-max amongst others. The aligner quality, clarity and finish are unmatchable. He also said that these aligners cannot be placed on partially erupted teeth nor can it be used in mixed dentition. Skeletal or orthognathic surgery patients cannot be treated with these aligners. Aspiring for greater heights The company now has many qualified technical dentists across all major metros and is also looking at deeper market penetration.

"We have been constantly organizing workshops, training doctors through lectures and hands on training by European leaders in the industry and prominent practitioners who throw light on various aspects of the technology and narrate success stories. The year 2013 was the best year for us as we grew three times and a positive phase of expansion lies ahead for us. We will increase manpower to ensure the product gains mile- age in the market through deep rooted awareness of the technology and its usage. We are looking to get atleast 40 sales professionals for this," Dr Khan added.

It is estimated that by 2025, almost 50 percent orthodontic cases would be treated using aligners and this only means that the company is aspiring for greater heights. Just like the aligner technology took off in the US, a couple of decades back, the Indian market is shadowing the same trend now and is dubbed to only grow.

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