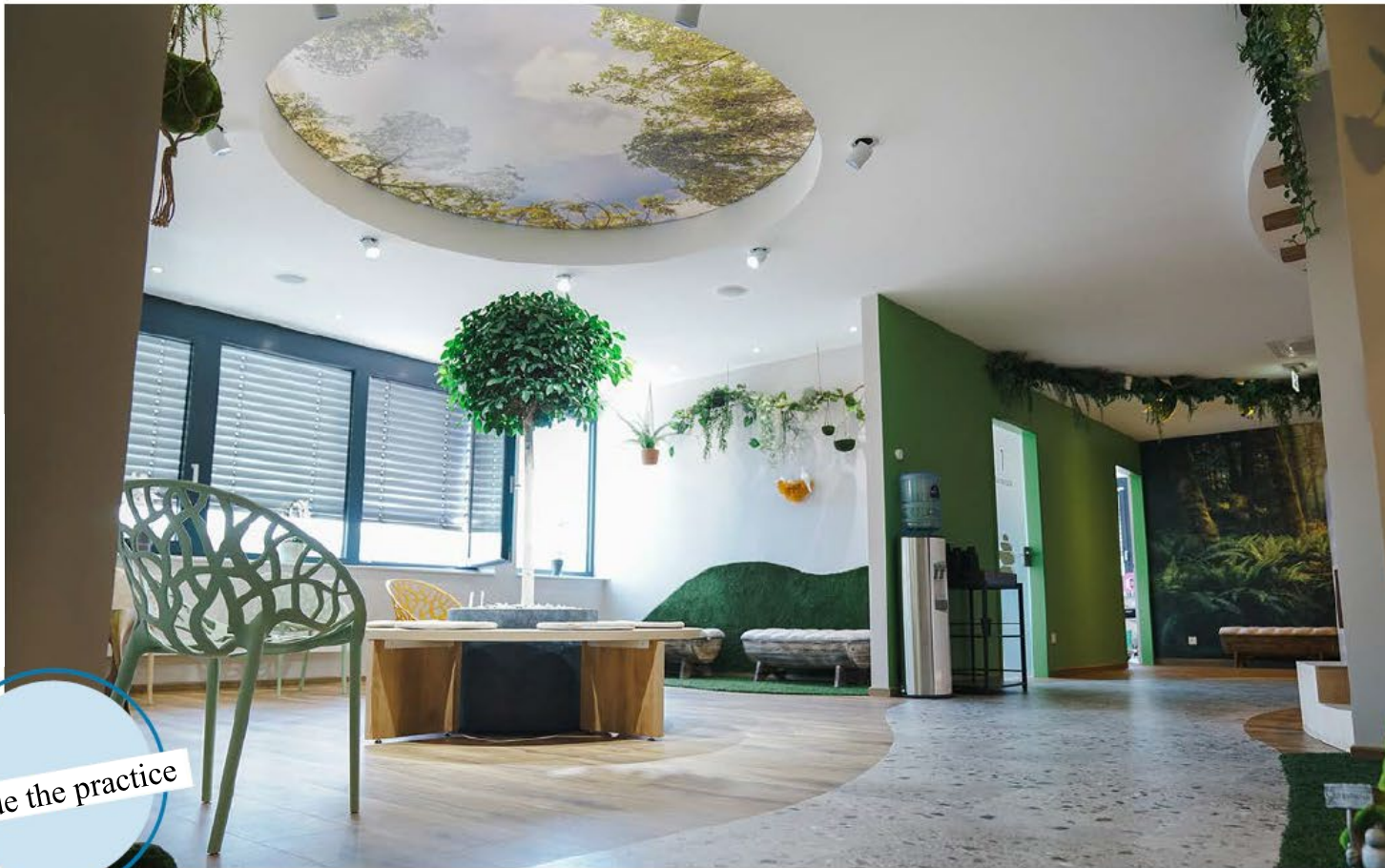


Inside the practice



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Inside the practice

A visit to the practice of...

Dr. Elena Baumgärtner and Arsenij Lifschiz

Dr. Elena Baumgärtner and Arsenij Lifschiz dreamed of having their own practice ever since they studied dentistry. Their dream finally came true in April 2023, when they opened a practice near Koblenz. The focus here is on sustainability and prevention: patients are treated to enable them to maintain their dental health for as long as possible. Another focus is pediatric dentistry.

Dr. Miriam Sonnet // Rheinstetten

For several years before founding their practice, the married couple Dr. Elena Baumgärtner and Arsenij Lifschiz worked together in the pediatric dental practice "Smile Club" in Waldshut-Tiengen in the southern Black Forest. "However, it was always clear to us that it would come down to independence in the end, and over time it crystallized more and more what was important to us," Baumgärtner recounts. "Dentistry, in my eyes, is a profession that is predestined for self-employment."

After family planning was complete, they looked around for a suitable practice – both in the Black Forest and in the Koblenz area, which is where their families live. Initially, they leaned towards a takeover. Many suitable practices were advertised in Koblenz at that time, as there were numerous dentists who were over 60 years old and intended to hand over their practice in the near future. "We looked at a few practices but were never really convinced," Lifschiz said. "In many of them, nothing had been invested for years: no digitization, everything was carpeted, and in all of them it smelled of the dentist. We would have had to invest a lot of money here on modernization." In addition, all of the premises only provided space for three to four treatment rooms. "However, we plan to hire more dentists in the future, so we need more space," says Baumgärtner. And: the existing patient base of most takeover practices did not really appeal to the couple. The reason being that Baumgärtner and Lifschiz wanted to focus on pediatric dentistry, as this has been particularly close to their hearts since their time in Waldshut-Tiengen.

Away from the countryside, into the city

And so the decision was made to start a new practice. The advantage: "We were able to align the concept directly to what we had been thinking about for years," emphasizes Lifschiz. "A start-up naturally involves more risks. But ultimately you have to weigh up the pros and cons: would you prefer to take a somewhat riskier approach, but one that allows you to set things up the way you envision from the outset and has patients and employees who suit you? Or would you rather play it safe and make compromises to do so?"

Tip from Arsenij Lifschiz

"Specialize early and have a clear focus on professional development until you can become self-employed."

As nature lovers, Baumgärtner and Lifschiz initially considered settling in the countryside in the Black Forest region. But this idea was quickly discarded. "We specialize in certain fields. Myself on function, my husband on endo, plus the focus on dentistry for children. This type of specialization makes little sense in rural areas. You need the catchment area of cities here," Baumgärtner explains. In rural areas it is better to practice general dentistry.



Profile: Dr. Elena Baumgärtner:

- 2012: Examination at the University of Bonn
- From 2012: Employment in various practices and practice networks with different focuses
- 2014–2016: Master's studies with a focus on prosthetics and function
- 2017–2019: Curriculum pediatric dentistry
- 2020: Master's degree graduation
- 2019–2023: Occupation in a practice in Waldshut-Tiengen; foundation and management of the pediatric dental practice "Smile Club"
- Since 2023: Owner of the "Zahnhüsli" in Mülheim-Kärlich

Profile: Arsenij Lifschiz:

- Since 2007: Work with children and adults in the pedagogical field
- 2016: State examination at the University of Tübingen; dental internship in Brazil
- 2017: Work in a dental practice for children in Reutlingen, Germany
- 2018: Curriculum pediatric dentistry
- 2019–2023: Occupation in a practice in Waldshut-Tiengen; foundation and management of the pediatric dental practice "Smile Club"
- 2022: Curriculum endodontology
- Since 2023: Owner of the "Zahnhüsli" in Mülheim-Kärlich

The two looked at several premises in the Koblenz area. Yet here, too, nothing appeared suitable at first. They finally came across the industrial estate in Mülheim-Kärlich near Koblenz, which is located between three medium-sized cities: an ideal location in their opinion – as it would allow them to bridge waiting times, to combine shopping with a visit to the dentist. "We also work with general anesthesia in children. Then it is convenient when parents can go shopping in the shopping mall. We can then



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I simply can't believe it! What is generally more of an outcry of indignation is in this case a deliberate program for a feel-good atmosphere.

focus on treatment and the parents are distracted," says Lifschiz. Additional bonus points are the many parking spaces in the industrial estate and good public transport connections.

In the end, there was a choice between two premises. As conversion work at one of the premises proved to be difficult – the landlord did not allow any drilling in the ceiling and floor – the decision was made for the premises in Industriestrasse. "Our present landlord is extremely professional and was also already familiar with dental office fit-outs," says Baumgärtner. The

dentist couple signed the rental agreement at the end of August 2022. In terms of financing, the two worked with a consultant who helped them with financial and business plans. Everything else, including discussions with the bank, they had to do on their own because the consultant was not present.

Supply bottlenecks and planning uncertainties

Baumgärtner and Lifschiz started immediately with the conversion. The premises were a shell and everything had to be completely redone.

Fact sheet

General data on the "Zahnhüslis"

Industriestrasse 51b
56218 Mülheim-Kärlich
<https://zahnhuesli.de/>

Numbers

- Size of the practice: 400 sqm
- Owned or leased property: rented
- Number of treatment rooms: 8, currently 4 equipped
- Number of practitioners: 2 full time
- Number of dental assistants: 5 full time, 4 part time
- 1 cleaning person / sterile goods assistant
- 1 trainee
- Patients per day: approx. 45
- Costs for PMPR per GBT guidelines: 120 euros/hour

Practice hours

Monday to Friday, 8.00 am to 6.00 pm

Public transport stop? Yes, right on the doorstep.

Accessibility? Yes.

Is there a philosophy? Humanity, sustainability, growth and efficiency

Concept: Minimally invasive, preventive dentistry. Building confidence in modern dentistry as the cornerstone for an anxiety-free and healthy patient-dentist relationship

Local cooperation: Kindergartens and schools, orthodontists, physiotherapists, pediatricians

Software, ordering of goods etc.

- Software for accounting and patient data management: Dentport
- Software for personnel administration: medikit
- Software for appointments: Dentport/Dr. Flex
- Ordering of goods: online
- Cooperation with a depot: Bruns and Klein (as well as various AERA depots)
- QM: QM will be gradually processed via CQMS (start-up)
- Billing: by practice owners, checked by receptionist/billing coordinator
- Documentation: fully digital
- In-house laboratory: yes, for corrections to existing dentures or fabrication of temporaries; expansion, e.g., 3D printer, and milling machines for CAD/CAM in-house fabrication of dentures are planned
- Cooperation with how many laboratories: 4
- Do you have work done abroad? No, because quality comes first, as does sustainability – why manufacture something elsewhere that can be made locally? In addition, the effort required for reworking is high, and technicians are not available on site.

They enlisted the help of a construction company and an interior designer. A building designer created the practice structure and


architecture. "For us, the situation was not all that easy as we still lived in the Black Forest and could not always be on site,"

explains Lifschiz. Much of the work was delayed, not least due to shortages in the supply of materials. Quite a number of things could only be taken care of in the last four weeks before opening the practice. "If someone had asked me the week before the opening if we could have the practice up and running by the following week – I would have said 'no,'" says Baumgärtner. However, the schedule of the two dentists was already fully booked for the first three weeks, and a delayed opening was out of the question. And so they did everything they could possibly do to ensure that the practice could open on April 3 – and with success.

Baumgärtner and Lifschiz have the location itself to thank for the busy schedule right at the start. In addition, they put tremendous effort into advertising: articles were published in the local newspaper and social media ads were placed. Furthermore, they rented billboards located right at the entrance of the industrial estate for a week and had flyers printed for the opening. "But most patients actually became aware of us through social media," reports Lifschiz. As the two owners are currently very satisfied with the influx of patients, the marketing measures have now been discontinued.

Tip from Dr. Elena Baumgärtner

"Go into a general practice and find out what you really enjoyed. Find something that you are very good at and specialize in that."



She also found her staff through newspaper articles and social media. "What was important to us here was that the colleagues were motivated, liked our concept and could identify with it," says Baumgärtner. Motivated employees can always be taught skills. "We are happy to invest time and money in our employees if we see they have drive." There were no trial days. "Here I don't understand the sense behind it. It takes more than just one day to see if a person fits or not," says the dentist. The employees receive a company pension and health insurance. "We pay great attention to the health of our employees. For example, we never have an member of staff who spends ten hours a day doing nothing but prevention," emphasizes Baumgärtner. Employee appraisals are currently held every two weeks, and team meetings weekly.

Bringing the Black Forest into the practice

The love of the Black Forest is clearly evident in the practice: everything is in shades of green and the look of wood, the walls are covered with forest wallpaper and each room has its own theme. The waiting room is large and open-space, with a tree in the center that is lit from above, and a children's area in the corner. The reception is reminiscent of a small hut. Televisions are suspended from the ceiling in the treatment rooms, showing images of nature.



"We work with and for people"

Interview with Dr. Elena Baumgärtner

Die junge Zahnmedizin: What is the focus of your practice?

Dr. Elena Baumgärtner: We offer minimally invasive, sustainable dentistry. We treat both children and adults. The focus is on endodontics, esthetics, prosthetics and function.

DjZ: What is your practice concept?

Dr. Elena Baumgärtner: We place a lot of emphasis on sustainability. By this, I do not primarily mean the environmental aspect - which of course also plays a major role in the practice - but rather prevention, in other words, good, long-term treatment. This includes educating the patients themselves and building up their skills so that they can have healthy teeth for as long as possible.

We try to make treatment as pleasant as possible for the patients. This also includes combining appointments so that patients have to come to attend the practice as infrequently as possible. In addition, we always approach each patient individually. There is no such thing as a standard procedure for treating everyone. To give an example: some of our patients are partially edentulous, but are doing well and do not want dentures. These and similar wishes must be addressed. We work with and for people, this is something one must never forget.

DjZ: What is so special about pediatric dentistry?

Dr. Elena Baumgärtner: There are hardly any specialized pediatric dental practices in the area where we are located. In my opinion, pediatric dentistry in general is still treated far too casually – and children's teeth often receive the same treatment as adult teeth. This merely creates anxious patients. Once a child has lost confidence, it is very difficult to rebuild it. We ourselves look after three schools and take care of adolescent dental care.

DjZ: You work with the GBT concept – what exactly does that entail?

Dr. Elena Baumgärtner: GBT stands for "Guided Biofilm Therapy". This is a particularly gentle prevention protocol. You disclose the teeth and treat only what really needs to be treated. With conventional PMPR, it can happen that the teeth are damaged because the work is not gentle on the tooth substance. Special emphasis is also placed here on improving the patient's "dental IQ" in educational discussions and oral hygiene training. This makes it a perfect fit for our practice concept of minimally invasive treatment and promoting sustainable health.

If a treatment takes longer, patients are allowed to choose a series. For the children there are children's series. The adult and children's areas are separated from each other in the practice. What is particularly important to Lifschiz and Baumgärtner: the practice does not smell like a dentist's office. This is ensured by a fragrance dispenser directly at the entrance.

By the way, the name "Zahnhüsli" (tooth hut) is a homage to their time in the southern Black Forest near Switzerland, where small houses are simply referred to as "Hüsli". "I had some reservations about the name initially – after all, we were establishing ourselves in an industrial estate and I wasn't sure whether such a name would go down well here." Baumgärtner: "But the name is extremely fitting for us and our concept. It has something familiar and secure about it." The Hüsli is also reflected in the logo: with a small roof over the "ü".

More interaction, please!

For Baumgärtner, the advantages of self-employment are clear: "No false pretenses, just pursue your own concept – and without any restrictions. However, there are a number of things that you first have to "grow into". "Staff management in particular is very time-consuming and involves a lot of communication. At the same time, you are under pressure to be cost-effective. And there are also numerous things that need doing in the background – ranging from preprinted forms to educational cards. This then has to be done alongside regular work." The team-building phase was also challenging: "We didn't know our employees and vice versa."

Tip from Arsenij Lifschiz

"Obtain multiple cost estimates for everything you buy, because there are huge choices for everything. If you compare prices, you can save quite a bit of money."

For the future, the two would like to see more exchange among dentists. "I don't understand why there is still so much competitiveness among dentists. There are enough patients for everyone. And one can only benefit from each other by sharing and being friendly to each other."

Dr. Miriam Sonnet //

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