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Dental implants on the Japanese market

The world's third largest market

According to an estimate in 2006, the Japanese market for dental implants is worth USD 180 million, and has grown by nearly 20% annually in recent years. Japan is the world's third largest market after the United States and Germany.

More and more Japanese dentists are learning implant techniques, and their patients are requesting increasingly durable, attractive replacements for lost teeth. Working with implants is an attractive way for Japanese dentists to boost revenues. Dental implants are not covered by the national dental insurance, which means that the treatment must be paid by the patient. Despite this, the Japanese market is estimated to be worth USD 317 million by 2010.

Japan's population is 128 million. In 2006, some 400,000 implants were installed. Comparing the number dental implants per 10,000 residents gives an idea of how mature the market is and what the growth potential is:

Country	Implants per 10,000 residents
Sweden	120–125
USA	40
Japan	34

This clearly shows the growth opportunities for dental implants in Japan.

In 2006, Astra Tech was the third largest company on the Japanese implant market, with an 11% share of the market. The company's goal is to climb to number two within a couple of years. Astra Tech markets itself in Japan as the company that offers easy, safe solutions, which appeals to Japanese dentists. The market leader is Nobel Biocare, followed by a Japanese company, Japanese Medical Market (JMM).

Astra Tech acquires distributor

For the past 12 years, Astra Tech has had Denics International Co., Ltd. as its distributor of dental implants on the Japanese market. Denics is headquartered in Tokyo and has 60 employees. The company markets a range of dental products, of which Astra Tech's implants make up most of the turnover. Other products include dental lasers and teeth whiteners. Now Denics is becoming a wholly-owned

subsidiary of Astra Tech. The president of the new subsidiary, which will be called Astra Tech K.K., will be Denic's current manager, Kengo Iwai.

Regulations on the Japanese market

Japan is a member of the Global Harmonization Task Force, GHTF, a voluntary group of representatives from national medical device regulatory authorities and the regulated industry, which aims to harmonize international regulation of medical devices.

The Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) is in charge of granting permits to market and sell dental implants in Japan. A new law was adopted in 2005 to harmonize the granting of these permits to international standards. All foreign companies that sell medical devices in Japan must go through a local dealer or establish an office in Japan. Dental implants are classified as advanced medical devices and must be inspected by the Pharmaceutical and Medical Device Agency (PMDA) and approved by the MHLW.

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