

Visiting the Rosenpark Klinik in Germany

Interview with Dr Gerhard Sattler

In a garden blooming with roses, we interviewed Dr Gerhard Sattler of the Rosenpark Klinik in Germany for his tips on managing the clinic for 20 years and his philosophy on treating patients.

Dr Gerhard Sattler


Dr Gerhard Sattler is regarded worldwide as an authority in aesthetic-surgical dermatology, for liposuction, vein treatment, treatments using the most gentle form of anesthesia, tumescent local anesthesia, for wrinkle treatment and facial rejuvenation.

At this time, Dr Gerhard Sattler was one of the first physicians to be involved with aesthetic medicine - particularly with liposuction and facial rejuvenation. Since that time, he has combined a hobby and his professional work. To date, Dr Sattler has personally performed more than 10,000 liposuctions and over 30,000 facial rejuvenation treatments

Career

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Dermatochirurgie (DGDC)
– Founding Member, 2011 until 2012 President
International Society of Dermatologic Surgery (ISDS)
– Past President and Executive Director





Q. The garden in the clinic is very beautiful, as evidenced by its name, Rosenpark Klinik. We have heard that you've run this clinic for quite some time now. Can you describe your clinic to our readers?

A. We opened it on the 3rd of February in 1997. I remember clearly there was nothing like this. After 18 years now all the plants are growing and this beautiful garden is formed.

If I talk more about the building itself, this building is very symbolic to me in many ways.

As you can see, Rosenpark literally means 'rose park.' The reason we made the garden bigger and the building smaller relative to the size of the site was because we wanted to provide peace of mind to our patients by close contact with nature and to create a symbolic space for our patients that gives them the expectation and confidence to become beautiful through these blooming roses.

Everyone has the right not only to look nice but also to blossom again. I want to show my attitude towards my patients, to all my patients through this symbolic space of Rosenpark.

Also, this has a symbolic meaning in my business. I try hard to maintain the antique feeling of the clinic to show my patients that we are aging with them together through the sands of time since the beginning of my business, and my first patient. While the exterior maintains its antique atmosphere as a symbolic meaning, in the interior we continuously make effort to provide superb treatment with the integration of world-class technology with the best medical personnel and devices as our patients live a functionally more stylish life in a new era.

Q. After hearing about the symbolic meanings of the clinic, it looks even more beautiful. Let's talk about the management of such a beautiful clinic. We would like to hear about the size of the clinic and management tips.

A. We have about 74 or so persons currently working at Rosenpark. There are 22 medical personnel, including our doctors and nurses, and we are continuously recruiting new medical personnel.

In the Rosenpark Klinik, we have not only medical facilities but also a marketing team that performs all marketing duties of the clinic, including market research and advertising and we have even a studio within the clinic for such purposes.

And I don't like passively treating my patients with only the established treatments. We have a specialized research team with up-to-date facilities that performs research 365 days a year to provide safe and effective treatments through continuous research and experimentation and are steadily developing new treatments for skin aesthetics.

There are a few important factors that allow me to manage a clinic this size for a long time.

The first factor is that my wife, Dr Sonja Sattler, has aided me. My wife manages the clinic and I just treat my patients. So we have that in a balance. Without Sonja, I would never ever have been able to pull this through.

Although sometimes we have to make decisions and then my partner asks me 'Why didn't you ask me?' That's why I always say she is my boss. But you understand what I want to say. So I am the boss of the Rosenpark Klinik, but she is my boss. So that is the number one factor to run the clinic in a balanced way.



Number two, respect for the employees is important in managing the clinic. If this relationship is too stiff with much distance between you and your staff, it can be a large obstacle in running a big-sized clinic in an organized way.

In my case, I don't leave it all to my employees, I join them in managing the gardens and cleaning the clinic, including treatment rooms I try to listen to their needs and opinions and make them feel happy.

Otherwise small and large problems can cause bad relationships that will be translated into the work atmosphere in the treatment room where the patients should feel most comfortable.

Because of this work environment, no employee asks or answers what day of the week today is or what time it is. No one works to go home after work or go on a holiday.

I am happy through this kind of relationship with the employees and patients and this influences clinic management and my whole life.

I knew a clinic director who was a self-directing manager, who suddenly developed a disease because of stress. So, being successful is related to people, not money.

Of course you need good relationships with the media. They need to write something new, professional, and of high quality every day and they look for people who can provide this source. In my case, the results of my continuous research and development in the field of aesthetic medicine made them come to me and information about me, my clinic and the results of my research was naturally passed to many people through them.

The reason I could continue such a big-sized clinic for a long time was because I obtained happiness and high-quality life through these relationships.

Q. Apart from the beautiful exterior, up-to-date internal facilities are impressive. In particular, the INTRAcel and ULTRAcel devices from Korea catch the eyes.

A. It has been some time since I bought the INTRAcel device and I bought the special new ULTRAcel equipment recently to complement the minimally invasive therapy which was dominant.

Long before we opened here, I was a resident in a public health care hospital for dermatology and I started doing liposuction in late 1989, which marked a new era for me. I personally have done more than 12,000 liposuctions. And that gave me experience with a lot of aesthetic patients and I was always very much touched by aesthetic matters. I have done aesthetic surgery for more than 26-28 years and these experiences have allowed me to become the doctor I am today.

But as time passed, there have been new requests from patients for new aesthetic techniques, and the invasive needle techniques such as Botox have actually been overruling my main liposuction expertise. In Europe you don't really need lasers so much anymore because new injection techniques like Botox have been really very convincing.

But now today with new HIFU and radiofrequency technologies and also the ULTRAcel device with combined technologies of micro-needling and radiofrequency, they will open a new era after injection therapy for the aesthetic market in Europe. As these technologies are more effective in Caucasian skin, which is thinner than that of Asians, these will complement injection treatments such as Botox.

Of course the more you do, the more you see the limit of what you can actually achieve. I want to equip more devices to complement this, but there is a limit in space. As I said earlier, I am very happy to have ULTRAcel, which is relatively very small with various functions in my clinic.

Due to ULTRAcel, I have everything in hand and so I can precisely individualize treatments for my patients. The device is highly effectively at a relatively low cost. Three functions in one machine are very impressive and I think this is the best machine. I think this machine with three functions will be positioned as an excellent device in each clinic that provides individualized treatment for upper-class patients.

So instead of performing radiofrequency in this room, micro-needling in that room and grid radiofrequency in another room, I can perform everything in one room and be with the patient continuously all the way through ULTRAcel. I have paid a lot for 2-3 or 4-5 years to get new devices. In that regard, ULTRAcel is especially new equipment.

Q. As a doctor who has worked in the field of aesthetic medicine for over 20 years, especially as a world-class expert in the field of liposuction, what is your philosophy in treating patients?

A. Whenever we do something, I think we have to love it with passion and dedication. And I personally had cancer from the ages of 18 to 21 and that actually guided my way. That's the reason why I wanted to study medicine. Thanks to the medicine, I can enjoy my life every day. I love my work after I chose to become a doctor.

And it is not for money, it is for experiencing challenges and bonding with individual patients. That is very important for me. So I want to provide a good service and satisfy the needs of my patients. And I think you have to share everything when you've become successful.

My concept of sharing is to utilize what I have maximally to try to provide other people with benefits. For example, providing the patients with the best treatments that have been developed by endless researches is one of them. An important factor is not to hope for compensation for my efforts but be happy that people can get happiness through my efforts. I feel happiness through this cycle.

In other words, you have to make yourself happy and not wish for returns. When you expect nothing to be returned, you can never be disappointed and try your best to pull out what you have and deliver it to other people. When I share what I have without hoping for something in return, I am happy that someone else is happy through my efforts and their expression of happiness.

I am very concerned about my patients' feelings and I focus on their feelings when they visit my clinic. Because it's not about me, it's about the patients.

This is one of the key elements you need, patients' trust. And then you can actually discuss things, promise things and offer your services. So 50% of treatment is psychology and a way to communicate with patients.

The first thing I say when I meet my patients is 'Good afternoon, Mrs Swanso. What can I do for you?' So they actually tell me the key factors about their concerns. There is never a table between me and the patient when we talk. We sit very closely and nothing is between us and then I make eye contact.

I actually open up as a doctor and make his or her concerns become my matters. So I think then we have a chance to be authentic and actually believe that we are concerned about the problems the patient has and in most cases they will trust you.

A very important point is that you should never actually oversell and undersell deliver. You should always undersell and oversell deliver. When that happens, you buy your freedom, because patients are happy. They feel they have been served very well and they will always come back. The beginning is more difficult, but over time the number of patients will grow and you don't really need to do anything about it because you have enough patients. This is the way we obtain fame.

I am a tool of the whole system and it's the same with the employees. Teaching someone to become enlightened is not a good idea and you should focus on the problems of the patients instead of making a profit. So you have to be authentic with your patients and really be happy to be a doctor instead of worrying about your wealth and fame.

When you treat patients you should not talk to them superficially but diagnose and treat the aging problem that decreases the charm of the patients. So one of my philosophies is that I identify the signs of diminished attractiveness for each patient and treat them to make beautiful changes instead of saying a high cheekbone is nice.

For Europeans, the skin problem is that they look older than they are.

For Caucasians in particular, we have more dramatic changes of the face in the aging process that takes much longer for an Asian individual and a Caucasian individual will start aging much earlier. To solve these problems, I rejuvenate the skin and treat the cheeks, sagging skin and neck wrinkles.

For Caucasians, dramatic changes can be obtained through aesthetic treatment. Through this process, patients maintain their youthful and beautiful face.



In Europe especially, there is a high discrepancy between the needs of individuals and the public and families and social groups which makes people choose aesthetic treatments.

In the case of aesthetic treatments, it is different in style in Europe compared to conspicuous treatments. The patient may face heavy criticism if the results are too conspicuous after the treatments. So whatever treatment the patient undergoes, the results should be natural.

An important factor is that while the people around the patient should not notice what has changed specifically. They should recognize that the patient has gotten more beautiful.

But over time, the benefit comes secondarily because people around the patient recognize the effect of the treatment more and more and the individual with confidence in his or her appearance stays dynamic and young compare to other people of the same age. So that raises the external and internal value of the patient.

Aging starts later in Asians, but with Caucasians, by the age of 35 you develop symptoms which make you not so attractive anymore. Then you have deficits in your life and such deficits become your inferiority complex or stress. These psychological and physical changes make you undergo treatment which regenerates skin and lipo-portionize your body. And suddenly you regain what you always had and you get your confidence back.

I am in my sixties this year. But I can always rejuvenate my looks and add vigor to my life. We need to reboot every day. Growing old and aging do not make us special. We should always know that we are special. I make the right diagnosis and treatment plans for each patient and perform the right treatments to provide the patients with something.

The patients can naturally return to their looks 2 years before. I show the patients pictures of their looks after the treatments. You should take these pictures with no flash, or with a special flash that is not overly bright. Then all the patients who have seen the pictures say 'This is me? I don't know the precise difference but I seem to have gone back 2 years! What have you done?'

So what I do, what the doctors do is actually reverse time. Do you understand? That's what we can do today.

Q. It seems that the reason you can work vigorously worldwide for such a long time is because it is based on a deep philosophy. What are your dreams in the future and further challenges? (Your dream or final destination as a doctor?)

A. Well, if you have achieved more than what you have wanted to fulfill in your life, you could say you have fulfilled your dreams.

Running a clinic for 10 to 20 years is not easy. The Rosenpark Klinik has been running for almost 20 years now with 8 years of preparation, so it's like a 30-year project. I am thankful that I can interact with my patients for over 30 years. I turn 60 this year, but I don't want to retire. I want to try various methods to advance aesthetic medical treatments as far as possible. If there are young doctors who think like me, I will join them and I want to have more expertise so that they will want to join me.

The goal in running my clinic is to make an aesthetic street with a lot of clinics in the centre of Germany like Harley Street in London. In this place I want to open aesthetic clinics of various classes, so that the patient can choose treatments they want for a price they can afford. Like a shopping street in the UK with luxury shops such as Prada, Gucci, and Hermes in the center and cheaper shops around them so that everyone can find what they want.

To some extent, aesthetic dermatology, aesthetic surgery, and plastic surgery are medicine. But it is also like an optional medicine for people who have high expectations, who live repetitive lives, and who are aware of their life and how their life goes on. To them, aesthetic dermatology is a question of quality of life.

So I want to provide optimally customized treatments to patients, which is something not everyone can do. As I aim high, it takes much effort to go up from the lower levels. As this field is very competitive, I should begin from the treatments that can be applied to anyone, but I continuously research and develop new methods to provide optimized treatment for patients depending on their lives and looks.

Success does not come in one moment. A lot of effort is needed every day. There is a German saying that 'the last shirt has no pockets' (Das letzte Hemd hat keine Taschen). Money is just money. It can be gone so quickly. Of course, it can influence a lot of people. But the truly important thing is what we carry now and how we endlessly think about sharing it with other people.