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LEADERSHIP IN SURGERY SYMPOSIUM

Transforming Surgery of Kosova in the Era of Uncertainty: What Will it Take?

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The Next Decade

“Kosova Journal of Surgery: an Official Journal of Kosova College of Surgeons”

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“All this will not be finished in the first hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first thousand days, nor in the life of this Administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin. The burden of ‘long twilight struggle’ lay on this people and this generation.”

President John F Kennedy
January 1961, Inaugural Address*

Nothing better and more profoundly expresses what we are about to do and what goals we have set ahead of us than this excerpt from President John F. Kennedy spoken during the inaugural presidential address in the cold winter of 1961. These words have been passed on from generation to generation, and have been the subject of many studies by world scholars. While he was discussing American politics and a way to bring country together, this statement can be used for many great initiatives and the struggles and birth of ideas. There is nothing that comes easy, and success does not come without hard work and commitment. We are beginning anew; the results will not be seen in the first hundred papers published in this Journal, nor perhaps in the first thousand papers and editorials, and perhaps not

for our lifetime. But, we have begun, fully committed to do our best to make this a success, yet we are keenly aware that the struggle for the future of surgery in Kosova is in this generation of surgeons consisting of every discipline.

After a long hiatus of 10 years, and after a very short life of three years, the Kosova Journal of Surgery (KJS) is again in the hands and inbox of the readers, but now as the official journal of the Kosova College of Surgeons. This is a huge task undertaken by all of us, but an absolute necessity for the science of surgery of Kosova, for the College, and for the future of surgery in our country.

The KJS is a peer-reviewed, open access journal that will publish original articles in the categories of clinical and experimental surgery; descriptions

*Arthur M Schlesinger, J. A Thousand Days. John F Kennedy in the White House, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1965

of modern operative techniques; review articles; and brief reports of both local and international surgeons from around the world.

We have assembled an impressive group of surgeons and scientists from around the world to form the editorial board who will help with the development and sustainability of the Journal.

The KJS editorial policies and mission, while closely aligned with the mission of KCS, will stay independent and publication will be based solely on scientific merits and high quality research. However, just like KCS, the journal will be open to all practicing and retired surgeons from academic and public hospitals and institutions as well as private practice and private hospitals across the country; residents of every surgical discipline; medical students who will pursue surgery in the future; and any healthcare workers who care for surgical patients.

The goal of the Journal is to increase and improve the quality of surgical care, increase academically-oriented human capacities, and improve access to modern, state-of-the-art surgical care. The creation of the Kosova College of Surgeons and resumption of the publication of the Journal reflects an important moment in the history of surgical science and practice in Kosova which stands at a crucial time and at a crossroads. It fills a major void in our organizational and scientific processes of the more than 800 surgeons of Kosova, as well as hundreds of other Kosovar surgeons practicing around the world. Until now, Kosovar surgeons did not have a place to gather and voice their concerns in a structured and peer-reviewed deliberate way. The College and Journal will be that place.

Over the last few decades the practice of surgery in Kosova has had significant challenges, although some progress has been made in very difficult circumstances and under occupation and war. Often the surgery in Kosova has served as “pass through service” for patients on their way to other surgical institutions in the region or other European medical centers. In this state, the education of young surgeons was not structured and organized, and it was often left up to individual surgeons to

gain knowledge and skills in complex and advanced surgical procedures that were being performed in our hospitals. Moreover, complex and advanced procedures on Kosova patients were and still are being done in other countries, paid by both the Kosova Government, but mostly by our private citizens. More troubling, surgical science and surgical research were diminishing into becoming oblivious and non-existing.

The first issue of the Journal, coincides with the two-year anniversary of the establishment of the Kosova College of Surgeons. On December 3, 2018, this generation of surgeons of Kosova decided to transform the practice and science of surgery for the sake of our patients, ourselves, and the students of surgery for generations to come.

In 1913, the American College of Surgeons (ACS) was created with Franklin Martin, MD, FACS at the helm (1). The ACS transformed the practice and science of surgery in America and with that, the world (3). Now, in December 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are starting a new decade of surgery in Kosova, a decade that will put a solid foundation to future development and sustainability.

Just as ACS, did it, the KCS, more than a century later, is in the position to transform surgery in our own country. To accomplish this feat, we need the strong support of our governments (both the U.S. and Kosova) as well as European partners and friends around the world.

The Kosova College of Surgeons and the Kosova Journal of Surgery are being funded currently by the International Virtual e-Hospital Foundation (3) (www.iveh.org) using our own strategy Initiate-Build-Operate-Transfer (IBOT). IBOT has been successfully employed to create telemedicine programs in Kosova (2002), Albania (2009), Cabo Verde (2012), and has assisted in further developing a program in Vietnam (2015) (3-6). IBOT will be used to make KCS and KJS another success story. The IVeH with its partners and donors, the majority of whom come from the Albanian-American community, has pledged to build and to support the College, the Journal, and their mission and vision for the next 10 years.

The mission of the KCS is to become the main driver of the quality improvement programs in all surgical disciplines, establish the mechanisms of creating leadership in surgery that will lead the College to new heights of modern surgery, establish full transparency of the quality of surgical care, and become a solid partner of the international surgery community worldwide.

We pledge to make the Kosova Journal of Surgery the new school of conducting and reporting research, writing, editing, peer reviewing, publishing high quality research, and helping with initiating and conducting clinical trials. By doing so, the Journal will advance the quality of surgical care and education of Kosovar surgeons. The first issue, with a new editorial board from all surgical disciplines, nationally and internationally, with some of the biggest names in surgery, is a testament of our resolve that the Kosova Journal of Surgery will become a journal that will be sought after by both young and established surgeons and scientists.

The first issue is dedicated to the ongoing leadership course in surgery. It was planned for the inaugural April 2020 Congress which was cancelled due to COVID-19. In fact, we were one of the first surgical societies in the world to cancel a surgical meeting due to the pandemic. Now almost a year into the pandemic (January 5, 2021), with almost 84 million affected, 1.8 million death worldwide, of which 1,400 deaths have occurred in Kosova) it is expected that the next Clinical

Congress will be virtual at best, as many other organizations around the world have implemented.

These first highly selective papers from the world leaders of surgery will set an incredibly high bar for the quality of papers to published in the future. We are grateful to every one of the surgeons who participated, from those who virtually delivered International Grand Rounds to those who have written state-of-the-art review papers. In addition, in this first issue, we the editors have decided to publish one original paper on the state of research in Kosova based on PubMed cited publications. This paper will tell the story about what we will need to do in the next decade.

We call upon all surgeons to contribute by submitting original papers to the journal with ideas as to how to make this appealing for all. We will have some innovative ways of publishing including video vignettes, letters to the editor, and a student's corner. How fast and how much we will grow, and when we will be on PubMed, will depend on every single one of us.

We take this opportunity to thank the past editorial boards and past editors-in chief, Prof. Sadri Bajraktari and Prof. Hasan Ahmeti for their hard work, dedication, and for putting in place the foundation of the Journal in very difficult times.

Finally, on behalf of the editorial board we wish you and your families a Happy and Healthy 2021. May the future years be better than the ones we left behind.

Suggested readings:

1. Nahrwold D, Kernahan P. A Century of Surgeons and Surgery: The American College of Surgeons 1913-2012. Chicago, ACS; 2012.
2. American College of Surgeons. www.facs.org. Accessed January 4, 2021.
3. International Virtual e-Hospital (IVeH). www.iveh.org. Accessed January 4, 2021.
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5. Latifi R. "Initiate-build-operate-transfer" - a strategy for establishing sustainable telemedicine programs not only in the developing countries. *Stud Health Technol Inform*. 2011;165:3-10. PMID: 21685579.
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