The 10th Congress of the Romanian Association for Endoscopic Surgery and Other Interventional Techniques

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We are in an age when technology is part of our daily lives and, even more so, our professional life. This fact was evident for those who participated in the 10th congress of the Romanian Association for Endoscopic Surgery and Other Interventional Techniques (RAES), held between 21st - 23rd of November 2019. With the general theme „Minimally Invasive Surgery - A plea for the continuous improvement of the results” and carried out within the framework offered by the Willbrook Platinum Business & Convention Center, this anniversary congress, with the scientific program endorsed by UEMS, benefited from an important participation, registering a total of over 350 participants.

With more than eighty national and international speakers, the Congress represented an important event both through the topics addressed but also through the anniversary aspect. We can say that it was the moment of a correct historical retrospective of the minimally invasive surgery in Romania with all its breakthroughs and limits. This was sustained through data presented by Prof. Cătălin Copăescu, the Congress President and Prof. Cristian Vladescu, the general director of the National School of Public Health, Management and Improvement in the Healthcare Domain. The increase of the complexity of the cases approached minimally-invasively was evident. Unfortunately, the rate of using laparoscopy in our country has not registered a substantial increase in the last three years as we have expected. For some laparoscopic operations a plateau phenomenon, to an overall rate below 20% has occurred. The reason is not clear, but these data has to be analyzed and RAES will look over this issue, considering the Association's educational role.

At the Congress participants had the opportunity to attend two pre-congress courses. The first course on basic techniques in laparoscopy was a fundamental introductory course in minimally invasive surgery (MIS) to be performed according to modern standards and it was endorsed by EAES. The course took place between 19th - 21st of November 2019 in Surgical Training Institute (STI). The course had an important hands-on component, the participants were working on animal models and were using the appropriate modern technology under the supervision of trainers with great experience in laparoscopic surgery.

The second course was aimed at "Basics in intraoperative ultrasound" and was also held at the Surgical Training Institute on 20th of November 2019, having as course director Mr. Dr. C. Țiu. Moreover, intraoperative ultrasound was also the theme of one of the Congress' sessions showing the interest for this non-invasive but accessible method. The use of live anesthetized animal models for these training was a premiere for the ultrasound courses.

The RAES mission to promote high quality standards and train surgeons for MIS marked every day of the Congress. The first session of each of the 3 days was dedicated to step-by-step procedures, aiming to stimulate surgeons to apply for EAES-UEMS MIS Diploma.

RAES Congress had, besides the primary topics in endoscopic surgery, an important part dedicated to patient safety. The topic that attracted a high number of participants was the one dedicated to the knowledge and prevention of the risks when using different forms of energy. We noticed the exceptional contribution of Prof. Dr. P. H. Fuchshuber (San Francisco, USA) international promoter of this project. It is worth mentioning that Prof. Dr. P. H. Fuchshuber is one of the creators of the Fundamental Use of Surgical Energy™ (FUSE) program, which is almost widespread in the U.S. The importance of this program can also be understood by the fact that it was officially adopted in France and China. The novelty and the importance of this topic were evident through the large number of participants both in the session on this topic

(chaired by P. H. Fuchshuber and C. Copaescu) and through-out the dedicated workshop under the guidance of the FUSE Certified experts: Dr. B. Smeu, Prof. D. Ulmeanu, Dr. G. Filip, Dr. M. Litescu, Dr. S. Filip, Dr. I. Balescu, Dr. F. Turcu and the coordination of P. H. Fuchshuber. The initiative to organize this workshop is to be commended. This is one of the ways to prevent the occurrence of adverse events during surgery. This aspect was resumed from another perspective by Prof. Dr. N. Francis, during the plenary conference "Sergiu Duca". His presentation addressed the aspect of errors and near-misses in laparoscopic surgery focusing on the later as a tool top regent adverse events.

Subscribing to the safety of the patient one of the plenary sessions had the subject of anti-coagulant treatment in the prevention of deep thrombosis in minimally invasive surgery. The session moderators (Prof. Dr. Doina Dimulescu, Dr. Daniela Godoroja, Dr. T. Rogula (Poland and US) pointed out the latest news in this field focusing on laparoscopic surgery.

The papers presented at the 10th RAES congress addressed various types of pathologies (colo-rectal, hepato-bilio-pancreatic, upper digestive tract, endocrine, thoracic, gynecological).

In the sessions dedicated to the colo-rectal pathology, another important point was the training of the future surgeons in minimally invasive surgery. The main point was the safe implementation of minimally invasive colo-rectal surgery on a national level.

A valuable input came from the experience of countries such as the United Kingdom (Prof. N. Francis, Laparoscopic Rectal Surgery - Past, Present and Future) and Poland (Prof. P. Myśliwiec - How to Improve the Quality of Colorectal Surgery - LapCo-Poland). Significant progress in the management of colorectal pathology was presented from Romania, too: Colorectal Cancer Screening Pilot Program - 3000 Patients Initial Experience in Ponderas Academic Hospital (A. Saftoiu and al., Bucharest), LAP - Colectomy Training Pathway - from LAPCO Great Britain to Eastern Europe (V. Tomulescu, Bucharest) or The Role of

Endoscopy for Colorectal Emergencies (G. Constantinescu, Bucharest).

In the session of the upper digestive tract pathology, an attraction point was the face-to-face dialogue with the pros and cons on the topic of textile meshes for reinforcement in hiatal hernia surgery. M. Bjelović (Serbia) and S.A. Antoniou (Cyprus) were the scientific „belligerents”. The active participation of the audience was achieved through online voting, which directly involved the participants in the debate.

Another very interesting session was dedicated to MIS Upper GI Malignancies and it was moderated by D. Predescu (Bucharest, Romania), K. Otsuka (Tokyo, Japan) and V. Bințințan (Cluj-Napoca, Romania). Two outstanding lectures presented by speakers from Japan marked the session: Minimally Invasive Esophagectomy and Radical Lymph Node Dissection Without Recurrent Laryngeal Nerve Paralysis (K. Otsuka) and Retrosternal Gastric Tube Reconstruction and Esophago-Gastric Tube Anastomosis in Esophagus Cancer Surgery in Our Institute (R. Kato).

The SMIT-RAES joint session is already a tradition for ARCE Congresses. This year, it was entitled Advances in Surgical Education and moderated by A. Melzer (Dundee, UK), S. A. Antoniou (Limassol, Cyprus) and C. Tiu (Câmpina, Romania). Outstanding topics were presented: Artificial and Machine Intelligence in the OR of the Future (A. Melzer), New Technologies In Minimally Invasive Surgery Training (C. Tiu), Tele-Mentoring in Minimally Invasive Surgery, (S. A. Antoniou) and Ultrasound for Surgeons. From Percutaneous Sampling of Abdominal Collections to Laparoscopic Ultrasound-Guided Tru-cut Biopsies (V. Bințințan).

Supporting the multidisciplinary approach for various pathologies, this year RAES organized a round table on MIS for Deep Endometriosis chaired by G. C. M. Graziosi (Utrecht, The Netherlands), N. Suci (Bucharest, Romania) and V. Simedrea (Timișoara, Romania). The discussions were very interesting, facing together the opinions of Gynecologists, GI surgeons, Urologists, Gastroenterologists.

Following the actual tendency, RAES Congress was mixing the discussions about advanced laparoscopy with the streamline of robotic surgery, significantly present in the scientific program. A dedicated Joint Session with The Romanian Robotic Surgery Club was moderated by N. Crișan (Cluj-Napoca, Romania), C. Duță (Timișoara, Romania) and A. Melzer (Dundee, UK). In the exposition, the participants were able to experience and understand the potential and capabilities of daVinci Xi surgical robot, yet unique, robotic platform.

Furthermore, during the congress was the second Master-class of robotic surgery organized by ARCE. This initiative showed the degree of interest but also the interest of RAES in training the new generations of surgeons. The topics covered during the robotic session ranged from oncological to gynecological or urological surgery. These are also the areas where the robotic platform has already fully demonstrated its capabilities. Benefiting from the expertise of specialists known in minimally invasive and robotic surgery such as C. Duță, Elvira Brătilă, N. Crișan, V. Tomulescu from Romania and A. Botea (Norway) A. Plumidis (Greece), P. E. F. Stijns (The Netherlands) the session proved extremely useful for those interested.

The Congress traditionally jointed the National Symposium on Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery, event endorsed by IFSO. In the scientific program several conferences are to be highlighted: The 2019 EAES Guidelines on Bariatric Surgery, (S.A. Antoniou, Greece), How I Balance Quality and Quantity in Bariatric Surgery - Insights from a High Volume Bariatric Surgery Centre (M. Bandari, India) or Sleep Apnea - Weight Loss Predictor (Laura Mihalache, Romania).

Besides sessions dedicated to the multidisciplinary approach of the bariatric patient and to step by step procedures, one session was entirely dedicated to risk of mediastinal migration after sleeve and it was chaired by N. Runkel (Germany) and C. Copaescu (Romania). The diagnostic, causes and possible solution to treat or prevent were discussed.

An IFSO-EC Live Webinar was organized during the symposium and it was dedicated to Banded Bariatric Procedures and significantly raised the interest of the participants.

The Presidential lecture for 2019 was dedicated to a hot topic of the moment: Barrett Esophagus and Sleeve - A Significant Risk?

Completing the program with interesting discussions about complications and innovative surgical techniques, the 11th Symposium of bariatric and Metabolic Surgery pushed one step forward the metabolic surgery in Romania.

Last but not least, we must remember with emotion the warm atmosphere of the Opening

Ceremony and the moment of the awarding of all the previous RAES presidents through whose important contribution the society has reached where it is today (Prof. dr. C. Dragomirescu, Prof. dr. I. Popescu, Prof. M. Beuran, Prof. E. Târcoveanu, Prof. dr. L. Fulger, Prof. dr. C. Copăescu).

We can say that the 10th RAES Anniversary Congress was successful and we hope that the new elected management team will boldly go with, at least, equal results.

Looking forward for the next RAES National Congress, planned to be organized by the new President, Prof. Dr. Ciprian Duta, in Timisoara.