

EDITORIAL

## Being a surgeon – A terrible and fascinating job

Dan Mischianu

At first it was a simple job: a barber, the surgeon, the "țirulic" (from Turkish language), the "gerah" (from Turkism "cerrah"), a job that did not dare to compare with the more "chosen" profession of "doctor/physician". Doctors represented something else, they were much esteemed in the public consciousness, and the society really appreciated them. Later, people learned and found that being a surgeon (term surgeon derives from the Greek "cheirurgos" means one that does the job with their own hands!), is a noble, very noble profession, perhaps simply because its practitioners live "risky lives"!

Surgery is quite different from being a "doctor/physician" and I assume this dichotomy trying to explain to the reader, in the most simple way: surgeons practice a risky job and live in this regard, particularly "dangerous"!

When I chose to serve in this profession I knew almost nothing about what it will happen to me during my professional life. I thought, as a medical student, that being a surgeon is a profession or a specialty as all the others, something that means to have a job and to go to "punch in", to sit in front of the "bench" (such as smiths!) or in front of your computer (if you are IT-ist!) and at H hour (usually 15:00) to get up from the desk, to close "the issue of the day" and leave never forgetting to "punch out". I never ever wanted something like this and God helped me in this regard! Now, in adulthood, I think I would not have been able to be part of such a "procedure"...

Then, shortly, nearly 40 years ago, I learned that being

a surgeon really is something else...

Surgery has valences of the ineffable.

I stayed in the hospital even for 2-3 days, and when the Revolution came I got home on 04/01/1990, after 19 days of alarm. I have gathered in my life as a surgeon, eight and a half days of shifts performed in our homeland hospitals. I think know what I want to share...

I wondered, often, who can become a true surgeon.

You do not get to become a surgeon because you want, you become a surgeon by chance. You were a painstaking student, you've prepared well for the secondary exam (old style) or the residency (new style), you get an efficient score and choose a surgery specialty. You thought you can endure this challenge... "Absolutely by chance" – as George Topârceanu's verse from the poem "Jealousy"... Many of these future "surgeons" will regret this decision for the rest of their lives!

Let me explain: you will not become a good surgeon unless you have a vocation for this job. He who chooses the job of resident surgeon because he has passed the residency exam will curse his uninspired choice when he will find out he has no vocation for it.

I met such surgeons. They ended up withdrawing in



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resignation "pigmented" by completely different concerns.

And therefore I find that being a surgeon is a vocational profession, such as the athletes or airplane pilots.

Because I remembered two other noble professions, have you ever asked the question how "consumptive" is being a surgeon? How challenging is it – pre and postoperatively, how much rigor is needed to practice it in the fairest way possible and how many years it shortens surgeon's life in comparison with other doctors? I am absolutely convinced that you know at what age is over the "working life" of great athletes like Nadia Comaneci, Gheorghe Hagi and, to answer your previous question, the surgeon life is shortened for an average of ten years compared to other colleagues.

I dare to mention two other issues. There are, in present times, surgeons who know a "relative anatomy" of the human body. Professor Dr. Eugen Târcoveanu specified 12 years ago, in a fabulous article, one simple thing: "Although today there is no compulsory internship anatomy, anatomical knowledge are indispensable to any surgical careers. Clinical training must precede technical training and manuality. This apprenticeship has changed since surgical specialization has become a necessity. This is beneficial considering the complexity of some surgical

fields. However, the formation of a surgeon must keep an overall basic surgery knowledge." (E. Târcoveanu – A fi chirurg în zilele noastre – Journal of surgery, Vol 10, No 3, 2014, Iași ISSN 1584-9341)

I think it is a pity of the legacy of William Harvey! These surgeons usually do not even get to practice this profession. They fail in peculiar professions like politics, diplomacy, business, etc.

There's also a "second group" of surgeons: those who do not like the clinical surgery. I do not think it is conceivable that after you operate a human being, you dare, having all the knowledge and diplomas, not to examine, to consult, to mend and talk with that man. Observation of man by man gives us some truths that we can not learn by phone, computer or "skype"! Perhaps only this simple fact makes and will always make surgery a terribly fascinating job!

I wrote these lines in the first decade of December 2016 with great sorrow in my heart about what happens to us doctors, especially to those born and not made surgeons. I wrote these lines with hope for humanity and respect for hardworking values! Before they became values! And I can only repeat myself. I wrote it before. Stephen King wrote in "The Shawshank Redemption" (translated to us as "The angels prison"): "Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of all, because hope dies last!..." But dies in torment I allowed myself to add, with undisguised cynicism!