

## JSMI introduction: East meets West

It is a real pleasure to welcome you in the name of the WFHSS to Osaka, which is already our 13th congress. I would like to thank our hosts of JSMI, president Takashi Okubo, congress chair Hiroyoshi Kobayashi and their collaborators. Not only is the organization perfect and the program very appealing but they also created the opportunity for the East to meet the West.

For many centuries already an interaction has been taking place between Eastern and Western culture and civilization. Moreover in the global economy the balance is more and more tipping in favor of the East. With this congress the mutual influence, on the domain of sterilization, will certainly be intensified. The West is the birthplace of sterilization. It still is, as we know it today, the model of a sterilization which has, in between, grown up. The East and more in particular Japan have developed the quality systems which had and have a big, positive impact on our way of working. They have enabled higher productivity at lower cost and this in combination with a reproducible quality. In order to remain up to date we maybe have, after the recent introduction of “lean” management, figure out how we can introduce the concept of “green” management in the CSSD.

The principles on which sterilization is based are fixed; only the context can be different. Principles are like laws of nature; they are timeless and universal; they transcend individual persons and specific cultures. They were valid in the past and will remain valid in the future. That is why they should be interpreted and applied in the same way by everybody. Unfortunately this is not always the case. There is e.g. a fundamental difference in approach to the subject “sterilization” and, thus, to the derived product “patient safety” between Europe and the United States of America. You can actually

and rightly speak of a world of difference. An example: while North-Americans emphasize the final checking of the end product with the help of chemical and biological indicators, the Europeans more move in the direction of mastering the compound processes, the validation of these processes and the support of the production through quality systems.

This difference entails a number of risks because, as we know from geometry, a straight line is defined by two points. Parallel lines only intersect in infinity. In our case the lines, in other words sterilization practices, will diverge more and more. This is perhaps a reduction ad absurdum that the sterilization world has to do its utmost to prevent this from happening and engage in a concerted effort to ensure that the sterilization practices do not further develop in different directions.

The “clash” between both schools is taking place all over the world, for example also in Japan, South America, The Middle East. This dialectic causes confusion in the mind. It places the departments, but maybe even more the sterilization associations, that have to outline the route for them, for a choice which is sometimes difficult to make. This issue is regrettable because it does not really help sterilization.

What can help us, are the lessons we can learn from history. In the past standardization in the departments has led to improved quality. If we can do the same at a higher level and achieve standardization between departments, this can certainly lead to a uniform and better national and international practice. Copying is in our case not a crime but a justifiable act.

A condition is that all actors put their own rights aside and release themselves from the emotional component which is still often attached to sterilization. These stand the further professionalization

of our discipline and a practice based on science in the way. For these reasons firstly, “the state of the art” has to be clearly defined. This is not the case today. We should find a consensus, a common ground, not a compromise, about it. I hope that, in the interest of sterilization, in the near future an answer can be given to this challenge. Then we can all together take the same road towards the future.

Because, where authenticity provides a frame to the own community in a growing multicultural society and means an enrichment for that society, this is not possible for sterilization. In this case there especially needs to be searched for an universal, common identity because it is important for the patient as well as for the department.

The means, men and the knowledge that are available determine the identity of the department. They are complementary, are symbiotic and they are a prerequisite to be able to produce an end product of the highest possible quality. Especially the knowledge of the members of staff will provide added value. Knowledge activates. It puts not only the process of thinking in motion, it maintains it if it is maintained itself. But it is essential that the rather passive “thinking” phase is followed by an active “doing” phase.

- It makes it possible that the best choice is made between the options that are available e.g. between different low temperature sterilization methods, different kinds and qualities of packaging materials, the range of detergents.
- It makes it possible to introduce a quality system.

Thinking and doing lead to progress and innovation. Simultaneously they make responsible because change also implies the taking up of responsibility for it. The famous saying by the French philosopher Descartes who in 1637 wrote: “Je pense, donc je suis”, “I think,

therefore I am”, still holds true for sterilization today. But with regards to sterilization Descartes’ aphorism should be changed into: “Knowledge is thinking and thinking is being”. The more extensive the knowledge available in a department, the more important the department will be not ‘in” but “for” the hospital; the more intense and frequent the interaction with other departments; the better the integration in the processes of care but concurrently also the more independence for the department and less dependence on the opinion of others.

Or .... In the same way as the newly discovered Higgs particle gives weight to matter, so does knowledge give weight to the sterilization department.

Or .... How philosophy can be important to the sterilization department.

We do not always and only have to refer to Western philosophers. Also the introduction to Eastern philosophy and Eastern values, in which respect, long-term objectives, harmony and collectivity, seniority and mentorship are essential, should make us aware and can be a stimulus to look at the usual state of affairs with a non-conventional regard. They can be a haven and a surplus to the way in which our departments are managed; but even more importantly they can lead to personal enrichment. Especially “respect” combined with paying attention to one’s environment can be a means of countering the ever increasing work load and the feelings lots of people have that their lives are being lived. When every step one takes in life is taken with attention then the possibilities become visible and as a result they can be grasped when they occur. Very interesting and thought provoking.

Finally I would like to say that this year, to my satisfaction, I have noticed that sterilization worldwide is making a big leap forwards. Everywhere in the world new departments are being built, old departments are being renovated. National and regional congresses and training sessions are being organized, and where there were no societies, new ones have been founded. This year the societies of Peru, Spain, Gabon, Russia, India, South America, Canada and Taiwan have become members of the WFHSS. Sterilization really is on the move! This is the work of all of you. I would like to thank and congratulate you for it! Let's carry on in the same way and with the same enthusiasm in order to meet the challenges that await us and to realize the dream of the WFHSS to bring about the further worldwide harmonization of the sterilization departments and of decontamination practices. Because every patient, wherever in the world has the basic right to be treated with a medical device of good quality.

Enjoy the conference, enjoy Japan, enjoy life and let's get connected.

Wim Renders

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