

Introduction WFHSS-DAS 2013, Antalya, Turkey

It is a great pleasure to me to welcome you to the 14th WFHSS congress. It is the second time that it takes place in Turkey, which is no coincidence at all. Turkey has always had, historically and geographically, a central position on the map of the world. For centuries, from the era of the Greeks and the Romans to the late middle ages, the silk route was the most important trade link between the east and the west. The silk route, a network of caravan trails through Central Asia, made intensive trading contacts possible between China and the east of Asia on the one hand and the Middle East and the Mediterranean on the other. This trade was of crucial importance in the development of civilizations and cultures. From different perspectives it helped to lay the foundation on which the modern world is built. Today we hope that, figuratively speaking, Turkey will reopen that old route thus making a contribution to the dissemination of contemporary decontamination practices not only in this region but throughout the whole world. Because, in the next few days, it will, in the field of sterilization, also lie on the crossroads between North and South.

As you could already ascertain today Antalya is a fascinating region, where antiquity meets modernity, where the present is built on a glorious past, on age-old traditions and on a culture which has been respectfully preserved. With good reason, because without a past there is no future. Participation in this congress provides an opportunity for all of us to continue building on the knowledge acquired in the past, applied in the present and used as the foundation on which the future is built.

But not only in Antalya traditions are kept alive. During my visits to sterilization departments all over the world I am all too often

confronted with practices which are based on oral communication, traditions, rituals and habits. But oral communication is unreliable, traditions are often fixed in stone, rituals provide a false sense of security and habits do not provide added value. Indeed, overreliance on the traditional ways of doing things puts a brake on the development of the CSSD and prevents it from making the transition to the 21st century, definitely and irrevocably. The CSSD, as an important facility department in the hospital, has to be open to change but also has to be flexible enough to adapt to a rapidly evolving hospital environment. Only in this way can it continue to play its crucial role and keep on functioning at the highest possible level. In sterilization too innovation, productivity and competitiveness form a golden triangle whose outline defines the mission of the CSSD which is, by providing a medical device which meets high quality standards, to support and to help the provider of care to deliver quality in care.

Therefore we must dare to make the transition to a rational sterilization practice. This is nothing but an evidence based practice (EBP). The principle of EBP has been applied for ages in the medical sector under the banner of Evidence Based Medicine. If we consider “sterilization” to be a fully-fledged, independent not only technical but also scientific discipline – I trust that I don’t have to convince anybody in the audience that this is indeed the case – we should apply this principle without hesitation and systematically to sterilization, our area of expertise. It guarantees the rational use of the available means with the ultimate aim of providing high quality care, which means the highest possible quality given the level of knowledge we have reached, and this in the interest of the patient.

In contrast to the “state of art”, a rather utopian approach, EBP is a practice oriented concept. Its implementation is based on realism as

it takes the differences between departments into account. Indeed the available means are not always the same; nor are the knowledge and expertise of the sterilization professional. The EBP concept is thus better suited to deal with the real world of sterilization. But at the same time it empowers the members of staff by making them responsible for their own level of knowledge and for updating and upgrading that knowledge.

The above is at the same time a proof ad absurdum that the WFHSS is not that important. The World Forum is not a goal on itself and can never become one. The national societies are much more important because they have close ties with the local departments. The latter, in other words all of you, are of crucial importance. All of you are playing a title role because without you it would be impossible of turning theory into practice. This is the most important phase in the whole process because if we do not succeed in bringing about change on the shop floor, the existence both of a national society and of the WFHSS is useless. The extent to which you succeed in transferring theory into practice will determine the success of the national societies and of the WFHSS.

The principal task of the World Forum is to support the national societies and to allow them to join forces in order to define and to give shape to the future of sterilization. That is the reason why we do our utmost to provide help with the setting up of national associations in countries where these do not yet exist.

In addition, a uniform basis for training courses in different countries should be developed. This also means that courses which meet the norms of the world body are given an official seal of approval. Furthermore additional steps have to be taken to have the job of

sterilization professional officially recognized and scientific research has to be stimulated.

The WFHSS should not get lost in red tape but has to be transformed into a scientific, dynamic and flexible organization where professionals working in sterilization departments and in companies collaborate in order to achieve better sterilization practices.

Finally I would like to thank DAS and more in particular its president Murat Gunaydin and his collaborators not only for what you can see and experience at the moment, namely the perfect location and organization of the congress but also and even more for all that you cannot see. I'm referring to the changes which have taken place during the previous 8 years in all sterilization departments in Turkey. Thanks to the training efforts of the local association an awareness came into being that has led to a revolutionary turnaround in sterilization. It crystallized in the modernization of lots of departments. Of course this would not have been possible without the commitment of all the members of staff involved and without the constructive support of the Ministry of Health.

I trust that other societies will follow this example because this can bring about progress on a global scale by ensuring that the mission of the world forum is realized: to see to it that every patient is treated with a medical device of the highest possible quality.

Within this context we will present at this congress the first step of EBP: knowledge based on scientific research. We trust that it leads to progress. A *conditio sine qua non* to make EBP succeed is that the results of scientific research are implemented fully and systematically. This requires an open mind, sufficient self-confidence, knowledge but especially courage, the courage to leave the old, well-trodden paths and to venture onto new roads. Or as Ataturk, whose

“Remembrance day” is celebrated next Sunday, expressed it: “be proud, work and trust”. I wish the same to you: pride in “sterilization”, job satisfaction and confidence in yourself and in the future.

Lots of success in sterilization, in your hospitals and in your lives. Life and life in sterilization can not find a better expression than in the song of Asik Veysel: “Uzun ince bir yoldayim” or “I’m walking on a long and narrow road”.

Wim Renders

Kayseri, 26/09/2013