

The Making of An Excellent Neurosurgeon

The career in neurosurgery is built on several corner stones: the personality and intellectual ability of the person, the level of the teacher, and the quality of the training program. For a successful career in neurosurgery, the basic education and training are of fundamental importance. There are two main concepts related to the philosophy of education in neurosurgery: in the first the focus is put on theory (study of textbooks guidelines, internet sources etc.), while in the second the focus is the practical training (or learning by doing – concept). The ideal training should be based on a balance between theory and practice.

Factors that influence the neurosurgical education are the ability of the educators and trainees on one hand, and the organization of the program and technical standards in the teaching center, on the other hand. The influence of an educator or mentor on the trainees is of paramount importance. His/her knowledge and behavior should be live examples to follow for the trainees. It is almost impossible to become a great neurosurgeon without having a teacher with a high level of moral and ethic – a person that demonstrates honesty in his professional behavior & both to his pupil and to his environment.

There are many parameters that could be considered as a prerequisite for a trainee to become a great neurosurgeon: family background; outstanding results at school; sports activity; ability to play a musical instrument, languages proficiency; social engagement; motivation for neurosurgery; knowledge how to write a good scientific paper; ability to present a project. But all these cannot substitute for the character of the person. Honesty & dedication to the patients from the beginning of the education will determine the success in the future.

Generally, it is believed that the skill of a neurosurgeon is equal to his manual dexterity. Those could make great careers who were dedicated and competent in all aspects, related to the patient's management: starting with the thorough history taking, complete examination and analytical evaluation of neurological, neurophysiologi-

cal, neuroradiological findings, and laboratory findings. Besides, it is essential that the trainee has a profound interest in the social life, mental condition and expectations of the patient. Last but not least, the endurance, mental power and health condition of the trainees during surgeries influence the stability of their performance.

Training in allied specialties is also a key. To-day, with the development of imaging, patients are coming with their CD when asking our opinion. We should never forget we have to cure patients but not pictures. Therefore, good knowledge in medical neurology, neuroradiology and pathology is really helpful in taking a good decision on the indication for surgery.

Taking time to talk with the patient and family before and after surgery is the base of confidence. We should teach our trainees to avoid falling in computerized world and remind them that a patient is a human being waiting for clear explanations on the treatment and post-operative course. In addition, a patient has also an anxious family waiting for daily news. An excellent neurosurgeon should combine technical and heart qualities.

Excellence is also based on experience. Experience means success and pitfalls. Success in 100% of our surgeries does not exist and we should learn from our mistakes or pitfalls. Every complication should be analyzed and be a lesson for avoiding its repetition. Therefore, humbleness and honesty make a neurosurgeon greater. A colleague who declares he has no complication, no pitfalls, who has 100% success in his hands, is a danger for our specialty and should never be trusted. In a good neurosurgical center, the patient's welfare must be in the center of all consideration.

A great neurosurgeon has to continue in all his professional life the scientific research and keep the ambition to develop the further improvement of neurosurgery to the benefit of his patients. So, the combination of brain excellence and hand skillfulness is one of the characteristics of an outstanding neurosurgeon.

At the end, I conclude that an excellent neurosurgeon/teacher should be proud when he is surpassed or exceeded by his fellows.

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