



Turkey loses one of the pioneers of microneurosurgery and a great scientific leader

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Professor Tunçalp Özgen, who was one of the forefront pioneers of microneurosurgery in Turkey, was lost on March 8, 2019, at the age of 73. Prof. Özgen is widely recognized as one of the most prominent names in the history of Turkish neurosurgery as well as a great educator who dedicated his life to promoting scientific method, knowledge, and education. His work was centered on increasing the scientific excellence both in his own university, in Turkey and worldwide.

Tunçalp Özgen was born in Kütahya in 1946. He grew up in Ankara and graduated from the Ankara College in 1963. He received his MD degree from the prestigious Hacettepe University in Ankara, Turkey, where he developed his career for another 50 years. He finished his neurosurgery training in 1974 at the same university. He was trained by Prof. Aykut Erbenği, who was among the first neurosurgeons to start an independent neurosurgery department in Turkey. After residency, Dr. Özgen started a fellowship in neurosurgery at Prof. M Gazi Yasargil's clinic at the University of Zurich in 1977. By this time, Prof. Yaşargil had introduced the microscope to the neurosurgical operating room and had opened a new era. Dr. Özgen returned to Turkey with this new skill and developed it to technical excellence, setting the standard in his home country. Upon returning to Turkey, he brought together a training microscope and started the first microneurosurgery training laboratory in Turkey at Hacettepe University Department of Neurosurgery. In this laboratory, he mentored countless neurosurgeons from Turkey and also from abroad and actively promoted the application of microsurgical techniques. He became an associate professor in 1979 and a full professor at Hacettepe University in 1988. Being true to those titles, Prof. Özgen was an extraordinary teacher, trainer,

mentor, and guide to those in neurosurgery, other clinical sciences and basic sciences alike. During his academic life, he produced as many as 238 publications that influenced neurosurgery and which were widely cited.

In addition to his excellence in surgical techniques, Prof. Özgen was also an extraordinary scientist as well as a promoter of science, scientific method, and scientific collaboration in Turkey. His efforts bore the first fruit in 1982 with the establishment of the Hacettepe University Institute of Neurosciences and Psychiatry, which aimed to train scientists and form a platform for multidisciplinary collaboration among basic scientists and clinicians. Apart from training countless world-class basic scientists, the institute also established a culture for academic neurosurgeons to obtain PhD degrees and be routinely involved in research, which set the new standard for the Turkish Neurosurgical Academia. With his efforts, Hacettepe University Department of Neurosurgery became world-renowned and was the first European Board-eligible Neurosurgery Department in Turkey. Prof. Özgen kept the same vision also while being the Chairman of Hacettepe Neurosurgery Department from 1999 to 2011, as the President of Hacettepe University from 1999 to 2008, and also as a member of the Higher Education Council of the Turkish State.

Professor Özgen was also a promoter of national and international scientific collaboration. He was one of the founding members of the Turkish Neurosurgical Society in 1985 and served as the president from 1988 to 1989. In 1992, he was elected as the WFNS delegate for the Turkish Neurosurgical Society and served for 7 years. He also puts a special emphasis on ties with European Neurosurgery and EANS. His name provokes an aura of friendship, respect, and collegial admiration for all those who were lucky to know him in person. In 1987, he was elected as a member of the Liaison Committee of the European Association of Neurosurgical Societies (EANS) and served until 1998. From 1991 to 1996, he served in the Education Committee of EANS. He was elected as the vice president of EANS in 1995 and served in the Administrative

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Committee of EANS from 1995 to 1999. In 1995, he was elected as the honorary vice president of the Academia Eurasiana Neurochirurgica (AEN) and as an honorary member of AEN in 2014. In 2014, with other former presidents of the Turkish Neurosurgical Society, Prof. Özgen formed the Turkish Neurosurgical Academy to provide guidance and scientific evidence for the field of neurosurgery, and promote research and collaboration. He was a member of numerous international societies and academies including the Turkish Neurosurgical Society, European Association of Neurosurgical Societies, Academia Eurasiana

Neurochirurgica, Congress of Neurological Surgeons, German Neurosurgical Academy, Japanese Neurosurgical Society, International Association of University Presidents, and European University Association.

Professor Tunçalp Özgen is survived by Prof. Mrs. Canan Özgen, their two children Burçe and Dalsu, and three grandchildren. He will be remembered as a great Turkish neurosurgical master and a great international scientific leader.

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