Introduction

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The famous Pala di Brera (also known as the Montefeltro Altarpiece or Brera Altarpiece) was painted, using tempera on wood, in 1472–1474 by the Italian Renaissance master Piero della Francesca (Fig. 1.1). It is housed in one of Milan's the Pinacoteca di Brera, and was commissioned by Federico III da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, to celebrate his conquest of several castles.

Federico was a great “condottiero” (warlord or captain at arms) of the Renaissance, and is shown kneeling on the right-hand side of the painting. Piero portrayed the Duke in profile, a position recollective of coins and medals. His profile is one of the most famous in history, because of the empty space above the nose.

The reason was that during a tournament Federico was injured with a lance, losing his right eye. According to the legend, he uttered, “Never mind, I’ll see better with one eye than with a hundred!” So, he decided to have the upper part of his nose cut away, in order to see better with his left eye. This might well be the first case of rhinoplasty we know about.

At the centre of the painting, hanging on a chain from the ceiling of the apse, is an egg, emblem of the promise of immortality and regeneration.

We like to think about regenerative medicine as the chain portrayed in the Pala di Brera.

In fact, during transfer of fat, injection of stem-cells and production of PRP, many different steps are required. For example, in the case of fat grafting we have to harvest the fat, process it, and, finally inject it into the recipient sites. These steps may be considered the four different links of a chain. Because a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, the

Fig. 1.1 The Montefeltro Altarpiece or Brera Altarpiece. (Courtesy of the Pinacoteca di Brera Museum, Milan, Italy <http://pinacotecabrera.org/>)

creation of a procedure, optimal from start to finish, is mandatory.

In fact, if one link of the chain is weak, then all the procedures will be compromised. In the case of Piero’s chain, the egg may fall. In the case of the transfer of fat, the fat cells will not survive and will not regenerate themselves in the recipient area.

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