Surgical training under altered conditions

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Dear readers,

Training in surgery should be a major concern to all. The relationship between quality and quantity in surgery is well established. The substantial changes in health care in Europe, in particular the restriction of working hours by the Working Hours Act (KA-AZG), will have a lasting impact on training in the future. In Austria, the concept of the importance of training and teaching cannot meet the new challenges, and is particularly behind compared to Anglo-Saxon countries. This is also reflected in a recent survey among people undergoing training in surgery, which is published in this issue by Bettina Klugsberger. In Germany, young surgeons have teamed up in the “Junge Chirurgen” (“Young Surgeons”; CAJC) working group within the Society of General and Visceral Surgery (DGAV), to meet the changing requirements. Their experiences and activities are impressive. In the article by Andreas Kirschniak, the needs in training are pointed out. The aim of this special issue was also to present the conditions in terms of education and training in other countries from the perspective of European conditions. Many young surgeons go abroad to work or to do research. The personal view of a young surgeon in the States is reflected best by the manuscript by Jens

Berli and Gerald Brandacher. They stress dedication, mentorship, and exposure as the three main pillars of training. Doing your Doctor of Philosophy degree abroad has become increasingly popular. Annemarie Weissenbacher describes her experience with respect to this matter, and shows that exposure to a new research environment enhances personal development, gains language skills, and enhances the career significantly.

Nevertheless, in light of the substantial changes in health care, leadership is mandatory, which is stressed by PA Clavien et al. and myself in this issue of the journal. Effort must be expended and paradigms broken with, such that challenges can be addressed. In the States, working hours were limited from 100 to 80 hours a week. In Europe, we have arrived at 48 hours. Without accompanying measures, the quality of surgery is not to be maintained. We are required to rise the challenges with innovative measures that include contemporary workplace conditions, several working time models, an appropriate work–life balance, appropriate salary, and so on; but any changes also have to be accompanied by new considerations related to legislative modifications. Overall, the aim must be to maintain the current high quality in surgery throughout Austria, despite the changing circumstances.

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