Editorial

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The main topic of this issue of *European Surgery* deals with a very specific type of surgery – endoscopic transthoracic sympathectomy (ETS) – not routinely performed in every department of surgery. The first reported open operation on the upper sympathetic system was performed by Alexander in 1889, but it was not before the Austrian surgeon Eduard Kux had reported a minimally invasive approach in 1951, that upper thoracic sympathetic surgery gained wider popularity.

Meanwhile, the International Society of Sympathetic Surgeons has been founded, exchanging their experiences and concepts every other year during an international symposium. The society's 6th symposium took place this May in Vienna, Austria.

In this issue we present an overview on various aspects of sympathetic surgery. After a short historical introduction, anatomical and pathophysiological insights are presented. Classical indications and techniques of thoracic sympathectomy are outlined. Newer indications such as facial hyperhidrosis and blushing are presented, which in some centers have become the most common indication for ETS surgery. A highly interesting and well documented large study from Finland on patients with social phobia gives intriguing aspects of future developments for ETS surgery. Finally, quality of life after sympathetic surgery is discussed as one of the most important measures in this field, where surgeons operate on mostly young and otherwise completely healthy patients.