

To our trainees: A transfer of experience from a senior generation to the most junior

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Usually older generations transfer their experience in specific surgical techniques to younger generations. This has been the usual practice in surgery since ever. The hard way is to transfer the general principles of good surgical practice. There are simple principles that, if recognized at an earlier stage of one's career could change the way of one's practice from the start. These principles are so simple but most important to successful practice. Principles which are so simple but, astonishingly, often need a life time of experience to appreciate fully. This message to the trainees may spare them many years to recognize such simple facts:

To achieve successful surgery we should follow the aphorism "choose well, cut well, get well". The decision whether to operate, when to operate, and what operation to do is very important. This decision shares about 70-75% of the surgical success.

Assessing the data on which we will take the decision does not follow figures alone but most important follows the clinical findings if there is any conflict between both. Sometimes we don't have a definitive diagnosis especially as in some cases of acute abdomen, but urgent measures should be undertaken. Also in case of mass causality; first pickup those whose lives can be saved by rapid interference then the others and the priority data should be reviewed from time to time as they are not static.

During the October 1973 war most of our surgical interventions were successful despite we were at the beginning of our surgical carrier. So successful surgery does not mean a clever surgeon but sometimes means a physiologically good patient. Our patients in this situation were

young, robust and so were able to stand our procedures.

Our first decision could be changed. Therefore avoid rigid attitudes, react to changes and we, as surgeons, should accept that. Remember that the decision you make, except in cases of emergency, might be better carried out by someone else who is available.

Be calm during surgical procedures. Do not rush as a rapid action results in a mistake and you may need to repeat the action. Every step of the operation should be done correctly as the sum of correct steps, even if they are small, will make a major successful surgery.

The standardized operative techniques result from a wide pooled experience and practice of many surgeons and we should stick to the learned rules.¹ Later in our life's career we may question certain points of a technique, modify and even improve them.

Before a certain operation, even if you have done it several times, you should prepare your mind and think over and over about the approach, difficulties, possible complications and the patient as a whole.

Tissue handling should be delicate. We should know that tissues can talk, please listen to. Respected tissues will respect our surgical outcome.

Do not hesitate to ask for help and discuss the problem with other people in the theatre or over the telephone. Sharing the problem with others will clarify it in our minds.

References:

- 1- Kirk RM: Teaching the craft of operative surgery. *Ann R Coll Surg Engl* 1996; 78(1 Suppl): 25-28.