

Professor Dr. Sergiu Duca – A Pathbreaker

Prof. Dr. Sergiu Duca was born on the 3rd of January 1936 in Dej (Cluj county) and left this world on the 21st of March 2004 in the IIIrd Surgical Clinic, clinic to which he was tied by an entire array of events which he had overcome with wisdom and honesty; clinic which, due to his vision on interpersonal relationships and to his exceptional accomplishments came to be known throughout the country.

After graduating from the Faculty of Medicine (Cluj) in 1959, he worked for 4 years as a district doctor. In 1963 he becomes Assistant Lecturer of the Anatomy Department (Cluj Medical-Pharmaceutic Institute), but after a very short period we meet him as Assistant Lecturer of the Surgery I Department, before his transfer in 1970 to the IIIrd Surgical Clinic. The revolution of 1989 finds him in the position of Lecturer and Chief of the IIIrd Surgical Clinic. His exceptional résumé allows him to become, in only a short period of 2 years, a Professor at the same clinic.

His professionalism and teaching skills propel him into the Teaching Council and the Senate of the “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy Cluj – Napoca, in which, through determination and intransigence, he maintains an active position, contributing to the rise of the medical educational level in Cluj.

Innately equipped with dedication and ambition, from his very first years of surgery, he sets great objectives, very difficult to attain. Proof of this are the experimental preoccupations related to liver transplant, performing in 1975 the first experimental hepatic transplant in the country. More than this, he demonstrated that hepatic microcirculation blockage through fibrin deposition is one of the main causes of failure of hepatic graft by perfusion under normothermia (article published in 1978 in *World J. Surgery*).

Biliary surgery was Prof. Dr. S. Duca’s “adoptive child”, domain in which he reached his most beautiful and greatest accomplishments. An enthusiast of perfection and details, he has always sought technical solutions for various problems in an era in which technology was far from the point at which we find it nowadays. In 1983 he implemented a choledochal exploration technique and an original procedure for Oddi

sphincterotomy, also developing the instrument necessary for that particular procedure.

An unfortunate incident determines him to intensify his preoccupations related to iatrogenic lesions of the main biliary tract, also recruiting to this purpose a series of young surgeons, an act which proved extraordinarily beneficial subsequently, in response to the increase in number of laparoscopic cholecystectomies performed in the country and, implicitly, in the number of lesions of the main biliary ducts.

The progression of technology at the end of the 20th century offered new diagnostic and therapeutic options. Visionary and “open-minded”, he performed multiple laparoscopic procedures, some of them have been done for the first time in Romania.

Wishing to share the knowledge of these new techniques with other fellow national surgeons he opens in 1993 the first Training Centre in Laparoscopic Surgery, organizing classes which were attended by an impressive number of general surgeons, urologists and gynaecologists. With the same aim in mind, he publishes in 1994 the first Romanian monograph dedicated to laparoscopic surgery of the biliary tract.

Desiring to promote the results of Romanian surgeons, he establishes in 1993 the Romanian Society of Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Surgery, and in 1995 the Romanian Society of Laparoscopic Surgery, organizing several symposiums and congresses, with large national and international attendance, initiating a series of collaborations with renown centres both from the country and from abroad, facilitating thusly a series of exchange programs for young surgeons.

The most beautiful and most important aspect of Prof. Dr. S Duca’s activity is that concerning the development and continuation of the surgical school of Cluj. He trusted in the younger generations, he supported and protected young surgeon when necessary, mobilized and encouraged them, all by maintaining at the same time a rigorous and distant image.

On the 21st of March 2004, aware of the evolution and prognosis of his disease, defying with dignity the suffering and discomfort created by it, passes away in the clinic that brought him both joys and sorrows, sad and happy moments alike.

Prof. Dr. Cornel Iancu