New Microsurgical Concepts

Developments in Ophthalmology

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Posterior and Anterior Segments

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J. Draeger, Hamburg
R. Winter, Hamburg

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Introduction

‘A new dimension in surgery is developing, perhaps one which belongs to the future. It is therefore necessary to collect an exchange of our personal experience so that unnecessary detours and erroneous development can be minimized, and so the technical and scientific progress in microsurgery can be developed in a systematic fashion.’

Heinrich Harms used these words on the occasion of the opening of the first meeting of our group on August 23, 1966, at Tbingen. Heinrich Harms continued: ‘Our combined efforts are also necessary since many well-known ophthalmologists have voiced their objections to such a
development. In our own country we have heard various arguments, such as: the method is too complicated, operating under the microscope takes too much time, one can operate just as well without some microscope as with a microscope.

Nowadays everybody around the world knows that none of these early objections has proved to be valid. Microsurgery indeed has changed ophthalmology as a whole: virtually nothing that I learnt as a young resident here in Hamburg, almost 30 years ago, is part of my everyday clinical work nowadays neither in modern diagnostics, nor in surgical therapy of eye diseases. A new world has been opened by technical progress, in instrumentation as in surgical methodology.

Harms and Mackensen indicated in their pioneering book the new horizons opened for anterior segment surgery when the operating microscope was introduced. Since then, 20 years have passed and our surgical procedures have become delicate to an extent which was at that time unimaginable. The indications for surgical procedures have been expanded and we can now schedule and perform procedures which at that time nobody could have even imagined. Ophthalmic microsurgery techniques have reached such an advanced degree of sophistication that we cannot see all possibilities and use them intelligently without having a deeper understanding of the basic fundamentals. To convey this knowledge, technical and surgical innovations into the general ophthalmic community of the world is one of the purposes, one of the obligations of our group. The search for even better solutions, for new horizons, is another one. There is no doubt that these aims could never have been reached without the dedicated help of ingenious technicians and engineers like Friedrich and Leonhard Klein, Hans Littmann and numerous others!

The main topic of this 20th Anniversary Meeting indicates our permanent readiness to face this difficult task: The group, dedicated for two decades mainly to microsurgical problems of the anterior segment, for the very first time will be dealing with the achievements of microsurgery of the posterior pole. Historically these two fields have been divided not only by different surgical methods, but also I may say so a different mental approach.

Microsurgery, applied as methodical means to both fields, now starts to unite the 'unequal brothers'.

We are particularly grateful to our invited guest speakers, communicating from their vast experience in this new field, first of all Madame la Professeur Mireille Bonnet from Lyon, who already in 1980 participated
in our meeting; Dr. Birngruber, the famous laser physicist; Dr. Machemer, former resident from Göttingen, now head of the department in Durham, one of the pioneers of sophisticated vitrectomy, and Dr. Zivojnovic from Rotterdam, who has pioneered vitreous replacement in posterior segment surgery.

Furthermore, it is my pleasant duty to welcome a great number of distinguished guests, attending this Anniversary Meeting of our group, also partly contributing from their clinical experience and research work. Last but not least, I welcome our Ladies, many of whom having attended most of the previous meetings so also having gained great experience in the background of microsurgery!

I am well aware that it is very difficult to compete with the meetings held in 1968 on the Bregenstock/Switzerland, 1970 in Mrida/Yucatán/Mexico, 1972 in Lund/Sweden, 1974 in London where, for the first time, vitrectomy as a new microsurgical technique was mentioned 1976 in Montreal/Canada, 1978 in St. Paul de Vence/France, 1980 in Formentor/Mallorca/Spain, 1982 in Las Vegas/USA and 1984 the last fabulous

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meeting arranged by Ruedi Witmer and Francis Bigar at Flims/Switzerland. It is a particular honour for me to welcome our Emeritus members, having served for many years the duties of regular membership of our group, having attended the meetings and contributed to our programmes:

Charles Dyson
Austin Fink
Gunther Mackensen, former secretary
Malcolm McCannel
Clement McCulloch
Sam McPherson, former secretary
Helmut Neubauer
Eric Smith
Alberto Urrets-Zavalia
Ruedi Witmer, former secretary

It is a particularly sad task to commemorate two of our founder members who have passed away since we last met in Flims Hans Sautter who from the very beginning was one of the forefathers of microsurgery in the world, not at least being for more than 10 years my admired master in clinical and scientific ophthalmology. Soon after, Jørn Boberg-Ans also passed away, far from Europe, far from his friends, accompanied only by Sonja, his companion for a long and happy private and professional life, her being his closest collaborator also in his microsurgical work. We are
indebted to Jrn for many ingenious suggestions, myself being one of his youngest disciples more than 25 years ago.  
The technical details of the seven sessions of our meeting have been provided, particularly by the friendly cooperation of the chairmen, who will coordinate the different subjects.  
The local organizing committee, not at least our friendly and helpful secretaries, will try hard to make this meeting a success, your stay in this beautiful city as enjoyable as possible.

J. Draeger