



The role of a scientific society in the training and development of an orthopaedic surgeon

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Becoming a surgeon is the result of a long labour of transmission, education and mentoring.

First, one must acquire the basic knowledge through learning and apprenticeship in general medical studies, to which the “doctor” will progressively add manual aspects to his practice, with a view to becoming a surgeon. Opening up a human body is no trivial action. Anatomical knowledge will first be gained from textbooks, then from dissecting cadavers and finally from daring to operate on living beings. It is an intense and powerful experience that can only be performed with one’s own hands, assisted by those who already have the knowledge: ‘The Elders’. Surgery is a craft that can only be perfected by slow steps, like a cabinet-maker who has learned the different types and properties of wood, to which he applies his resources and finesse, to prevent damaging what will become his finished work.

This mastery can only be gained by slow, painstaking steps, made up of apprenticeships and mistakes, supervised and corrected. The apprentice must be able to listen with humility to the advice and suggestions offered by those who

have already completed these steps. The awakening and maturation of this knowledge will lead, little by little, to individual, personal ideas which may sometimes question received knowledge and traditional dogmas. It is a personal voyage of discovery driven by constant questioning, always aimed critically at the enticing proposals of certain gurus or miracle techniques or technologies, which may permit one to surpass the elders in the search for ‘The Answer’. The surgeon or researcher in the making must be mindful and wary of all these novelties and apply objective methods when evaluating breakthrough innovations. He or she must be critical of such ‘fashionable’ ideas.

How is this long journey undertaken? University, textbooks, venerable documents and history. Communication techniques are becoming extremely varied, easy and attractive through videos, the Internet, instruction and pseudo-teaching. This endless flood of unsifted information pours daily into our email inboxes... How people deal with this information depends on their education, mentoring, and encounters which change, redirect and influence their lives. Self-questioning and a critical eye are needed to avoid falling into the trap of ‘convenience’.

It is for this purpose that a scientific society plays its most meaningful role: an open information channel, independent and free, whose consistency and neutrality are guaranteed by a community of sages (peer reviewers) and therefore sifted by experienced, proven professionals. A scientific society provides diversity through reasoned, weighted choices, the sifting of information, openness to discussion and the exchange of ideas.

ESSKA provides all these methods of ‘secured’ communication.

The biennial congress and the upcoming Speciality days meeting where all the energies are gathered in a single unity of time and place, as in a theatrical play, which is the basis of any performance. It has three purposes: (1) to provide a solid base for each subject, with advanced courses given by experts in the field (instruction course lecture, highlight

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lecture); (2) to stimulate open discussion using positive, constructive arguments, widening the scope to the audience (symposia), and lastly (3) to open the floor to young surgeons, scientists and researchers who come to expound their recent studies through free paper sessions. It is the best training ground for resident physicians and fellows because they will be exposed to criticism and questions to which they will have to respond.

At the same time, the congress should also be seen as a friendly, convivial gathering where everyone is free to meet and discuss matters with those present, from the usual podium stars to the youngest members.

This should be a unifying factor, joyful and engaging, bonding the members, encouraging those who are not yet members and promoting a positive spirit far removed from any political hegemony. ESSKA is a European company made up of different cultures and is open to all.

ESSKA also provides indispensable practical lessons. Classic courses, called cadaver labs, which have become educationally homogeneous over time, are practical lessons highly focused on a given topic which is explored exhaustively. The “All about” format, directed by experts (the “ESSKA Teachers”), permits the in-depth exploration of a very precise pathology. The technical and practical aspects are pushed to the limits and the theoretical part, developed in parallel, gives the participants a solid base on which to prepare these courses. The ESSKA Academy remains the backup where participants and members can return to view and re-view videos and theoretical presentations. These lessons form the bulk of what we call the “core curriculum”, the goal of which is clearly to provide only unofficial certification, albeit extremely practical for the day-to-day practice of a surgeon.

These courses are conceived and conducted in the spirit of mentorship, that is to say the practical and benevolent assistance given by the expert to one who is younger and less familiar. This form of intellectual transmission is found in the fellowships offered to the members of our society. These voyages of discovery are also a wonderful means of finding fertile ground to exchange ideas and forge friendships, essential to human freedom and wellbeing.

Lastly, ESSKA is a conduit for free and open publications, through the books written by the various committees and “sections”. These are available to the members on the ESSKA website and are often distributed during the biennial congresses. However, high-level, peer-reviewed publications can also be found in our two journals; the *KSSTA* is one of the top ten peer-reviewed journals of orthopaedic surgery and the *JEO* is an open-access peer-reviewed journal of rapidly growing impact and readership. These two journals guarantee independence from the continual flow of unfiltered information which is increasingly prevalent on the Internet and social media and is distributed by the self-promoting industry.

So this is what we at ESSKA have been doing since 1982, but the future still beckons and there are many more things to be done, which you, the members, and non-members alike are expecting. This is where collaborative work and the exchange of ideas are important, unifying and innovative.

The board and bodies such as the committees and “sections” need cohesion, an empathy with others to listen and be open to innovative ideas, which is what we seek by putting forward an operational strategy that will transform your ideas into concrete actions.

A society, like a human body, comprises an assembly of tiny cells, each capable of performing specific complementary tasks, so that all work together towards the realisation of an idea.

We therefore trust that you will read about and participate in ESSKA, which will enable ESSKA to be even more active at the heart of your scientific society.

David DEJOUR
ESSKA President

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