

Preface

In 1974, I had the opportunity to work with Dr. James R. Urbaniak, not only a pioneer in the field of microsurgery, but my friend and mentor, at the Orthopaedic Microsurgery Laboratory of the Veterans Administration Hospital which was affiliated with the Division of Orthopaedics, Department of Surgery, Duke University Medical Center, Durham, North Carolina, USA. At that time, we were working on a research project related to vascularized bone grafts where vascularized ribs were used to bridge a bony defect in the radius of dogs. This research was later published in *Surgical Forum* (Adelaar et al. 1974). To my surprise, a paper with similar content was published at the time by Östrup and Fredrickson (1974) in which the rib was used to reconstruct the mandible. Since then, I have had the good fortune to meet Leif Östrup on several occasions at scientific meetings and develop a very good friendship.

After I returned to Greece in 1975, I began the struggle of organizing a microsurgery team which was exceptionally difficult both on a clinical, as well as research basis. However, after the first steps were made, and throughout all of the years which have elapsed since then, microsurgery has demonstrated a booming evolution not only through out the world and including the Scandinavian countries and, but in Greece, as well. The Scandinavians have always played a pioneering role in all aspects of medicine including research, practice and education. They are recognized for maintaining high standards and have been paramount to the progress made in microsurgery. Greece through out all these years followed the "flow" of the leading countries and was able to present with similar and remarkable progress and activity in the field.

In spite of all the difficulties, particularly during the early stages, a number of achievements document the high status that microsurgery has reached in Greece: 1) Three major microsurgical centers exist in Greece, two in Athens and one in Ioannina where a large number of both trauma and reconstructive cases are performed each year; 2) In addition a good number of microsurgeons, who work in the private sector all over the country, contribute via their good training and excellency to meet the high demands; 3) The Hellenic Society for Reconstructive Microsurgery even though it is only 5 years in existence, consists of close to 100 members and has demonstrated a remarkable educational and scientific role in the field of Microsurgery in Greece; 4) The society, even though small in number and with a short life-span,

has managed to acquire its own central office thanks to the generous contribution of its members. Thus, a library, amphitheater and secretariat are available for its members; 5) Education in microsurgery is achieved through the annual meetings of the society, the continuous educational program offered by the Clinic for Surgery of the Hand and Microsurgery at "KAT" Hospital in Athens and the the Annual Microsurgical Seminar and Workshop which is sponsored by the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, University of Ioannina Medical School. In addition, microsurgery is an elective course in the medical school curriculum at the University of Ioannina Medical School; 6) Greece is a founding member of the Federation of the European Microsurgical Societies; 7) The 11th Congress of the International Microsurgical Society was held in Greece in 1992 which acted as an additional validation of the progress and status that Greece has achieved in Microsurgery over the past years. The Congress was met with great success which was undoubtable related to the impact and prestige of then President, Dr. Julia Terzis. Also in the 12th Congress in Nara, Japan, Greece was honored with the young investigator award for one of its papers (Malizos et al. 1994); 8) Furthermore, Greece was honored to organize the 4th European Congress of the Federation of Microsurgical Societies to be held in 1998; and 9) Finally, a good number of scientific papers, both on clinical and basic microsurgery, have been published in the international literature as well as in Greek orthopedic journals.

To commemorate the 20th anniversary of reconstructive microsurgery in Greece, it was my particular goal in guest editing this supplementum, that the readers of *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* would see the leaps and bounds which have occurred in microsurgery in Greece during the last 20 years. The body of original papers collected in this Supplementum not only reflect the evolution of microsurgery in Greece, but also the successful application of microsurgery to trauma and reconstructive orthopedics. I am indebted to authors for their contribution to both this issue and the profound progress in microsurgery in Greece.

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