PRESIDENTIAL NEWS AUGUST 2014

Dear colleagues and visitors of our website,

Swiss neurosurgeons have contributed to modern neurosurgery and triggered important neurosurgical innovations.

Despite that, the capability and the competence of Swiss neurosurgery as a whole has been questioned by a variety of interest groups, and furthermore, the so-called HSM commission has been installed in order to regroup neurosurgical competences and to possibly reallocate resources.

I see our role as a society (SSNC) to moderate and navigate through these challenges - and to restore confidence and coherence where this might have been lost somewhat throughout all these bureaucratic processes. It is up to us to show society and legislative and other partners our strengths in clinical and academic neurosurgery.

More than 150 Swiss neurosurgeons offer comprehensive care for a population of app. 8 Million people. This population corresponds more or less to the population of the greater Paris region. In Switzerland, these neurosurgeons are working in a geographically distributed and multi-cultural environment. Swiss neurosurgeons are working in public institutions, such as the major five academic and university centers in Basle, Berne, Geneva, Lausanne, and Zürich, respectively, or in the large cantonal hospitals in Aarau, Lugano and St. Gallen. There are smaller regional hospitals as well, offering neurosurgical care, and there is a number of very well equipped and staffed private hospitals in all major Swiss cities.

The overall socio-economic situation guarantees excellent boundary conditions not only for clinical care, but also for innovation and academics. In addition, Swiss neurosurgeons are part of the ever-increasing and innovative neuroscientific community. Many neurosurgical innovations which constitute an integral part of today's contemporary and modern neurosurgery were driven or promoted from Switzerland:
Microneurosurgery as a principle, modern epilepsy surgery, cerebral revascularization, osteosynthesis in spine surgery, intraoperative imaging, the introduction of hybrid operating rooms, highly focussed ultrasound, Proton beam therapy, to just name a few. Furthermore, the regrouping and funding of neurosciences (i.e. by the creation of Europe's largest neuroscientific research center, including computational neuroscience and neuroprosthetics) has allowed to generate important leverage with and cross-fertilization between clinical and basic sciences. In addition, there are major players in the medical device industry in close geographical proximity to most centers, thus enabling experimental and pre-clinical testing in a stimulating environment.

Training to become a neurosurgeon in Switzerland is rigorous, and it requires several theoretical tests, including the mandatory participation in the written exams of the European Association of Neurosurgical Societies, and participation in cranial and spinal hands-on courses, which are organized on behalf of the Swiss Society of Neurosurgery (SGNC) and its partner societies.

Despite being a small group of professionals in a small country, Swiss neurosurgeons are ready to tackle any neurosurgical problem. They share common databases for clinical research on a variety of topics, including cerebral aneurysms, intracerebral haemorrhage, and brain tumors. The following list of hospitals where neurosurgeons are working is as comprehensive as possible:

University hospitals
Cantonal hospitals
Regional hospitals
Private hospitals

Should you have a specific question regarding neurosurgical treatment, please don't hesitate to contact the office of the Swiss Society of Neurosurgery.

Professor Karl Schaller
President SSNC