

DEAR SURGEONS, SINCERELY FROM THE GASTRO TEAM

CAROS CIRURGIÕES, COM ESTIMA, DA EQUIPE GASTRO

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I am a gastroenterologist. I am part of the “GASTROS” team.

From a very young age, I learned the importance of having a surgeon around. A savior!

For me, a surgeon has always been the personification of the doctor with that magical and timeless aura, descended from our colleague Hippocrates.

The surgeons use the most technologically perfect instruments, but also the most fallible. The hands for sure, on the brain’s command.

It is not the scalpel, nor the surgical instruments, but the brain-hand dialogue. Art and Science together, for sure.

I even thought during the medical course that I would choose to be a surgeon for my life. Because it would be the closest specialty, to magical power, to a medicine made of spectacular activities.

We know that a large portion of your activity in the operating room is related to our Digestive System, around 60-70%. In other words, we are condemned to work as a team. What a pleasure!

We know that for the vast majority of you, receiving a patient from the “Gastros” is an indirect sign of the quality of your professionalism, both technical and human.

It is very comforting for us to call in the middle of a Consultation asking for a problem to be solved and to hear from the other side saying YES, we will solve it¹. It’s great to have the “Green Way” for the surgeon’s scalpel.

Or at 4 am in an Emergency Room having a surgeon with us performing one of the noblest acts of the medical art: palpating the abdomen.² Silence that we are going to palpate the abdomen, like a pianist called Keith Jarrett, before a Concert in Portugal.³

There is no country or city that can survive without surgeons, whether in peacetime or wartime. The COVID-19 catastrophe is proof of that. What would be a week without surgery?

Some say that surgeons are special beings, they have a different way of thinking. I think so too, and thankfully. Is there a surgical mindset?⁴ Is there a surgical reasoning?

Not having a deep knowledge of the operating room environment, I’m sure that from time to time there are people who ask “But who’s in the room is the leader.”⁵ A operating room is certainly a cockpit, a space for role-models, for training high-performance teams. Thank you for teaching us and promoting the checklists.⁶



Sometimes I see you work too hard, “twenty four by seven”, I know it’s necessary... Risk is your profession, but you have to rest more.⁷ You should invest in more time protected. To investigate, to write papers, to publish.

The Revista Portuguesa de Cirurgia has to be indexed in large international databases. The portuguese surgery deserves this distinction.

Returning to the “GASTROS” and with regard to one of the very important parts of gastroenterology, viral hepatitis, you are also strong allies here. The intervention of surgery in the field of viral hepatitis and its consequences has been remarkable. Regardless of the greater than 95% efficacy of hepatitis B vaccine and hepatitis C therapy, we will still need the surgeon. Who performs the resection of hepatocellular carcinoma nodules, who advances to liver transplantation?

What will our future look like? Nobody knows, but the two specialties have had a fantastic evolution: surgery with robotics, endoluminal surgery, the

practice of gastroenterology is becoming more and more surgical, using also the electric scalpel, performs endoluminal resections, closes perforations, etc.

We are no longer just a medical specialty, but a medical-surgical one.

I would even say minimally invasive surgery inside the 10 meters of the digestive tract.

A new Endoscopic Unit in a large Center should have one or two hybrid rooms, a mix of interventional endoscopy, surgery, anesthesiology, radiology.

At the end, in Portugal, we have to deal with a population with one of the best average life expectancies in the world, with a high burden of disease, multi-morbidities and fragility syndrome.

And now, get to work, surgeons and gastro. Operate, perform endoscopic exams, investigate but also write scientific articles.⁸ Basically, we are teams with characteristics of “High Performance Teams”.⁹ But our fantastic work should be published. Publish or Perish.

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