

TRIBUTE TO A GREAT SURGEON OF THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM: GERHARD FRIEDERIK BUSS

*A Man before his time (Sir Alfred Cuschieri)
April 10, 1948 - 30 October 2010*

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This year, the use of transanal endoscopic microsurgery (TEM) for the treatment of rectal tumors, completed 10 years in Brazil. Personally, and believing in the method, I introduced it in 2002 in the Department of Digestive Surgery, Hospital de Clínicas, Federal University of Paraná in Curitiba, Brazil. This method was created by Prof. Gerhard F. Buess, and its clinical application occurred since 1982. I well remember in that year, when I was in the Congress of Coloproctology in Fortaleza, Dr. Enio Ganio talking about a new method for minimally invasive treatment of rectal tumors, which began in Europe. I was thrilled with it, but dissuaded by my peers because it was dangerous to operate cancer with minimally invasive surgery and because the equipment was too expensive. Twenty years later I went to Tuebingen, Germany, to learn the method, and its creator gave me the privilege to be the one to introduce it in Brazil. No easy task!

We Brazilians are used to look to the north of the Americas, and turn back to Europe and bypass the East. This technique came from Europe, a method created by a German. The Americans were slow to accept it, although today there are in the United States of America 160 centers practicing TEM. Faced with this difficulty, Professor Buess came two times to Brazil to support and disseminate the method: Recife in 2004 at the Fourth Gastroenterology Week and FICARE in 2007, where I had the privilege of being his assistant in a TEM resection.

The history of TEM is closely linked to the life of this man, that death, treacherously, took him away from us. On October 30, 2010 the international scientific community lost one of its greatest scientists who pioneered the technical progress and influenced the minimally invasive surgery in the eighties.

He was pioneer in the laboratory simulations of surgical skills, trained many surgeons worldwide and took technological research to the scientific level. Man with strong personality, argumentatively, believed and defended his own ideas.

Gerhard Buess will remain as one of the few surgeons in the digestive tract whose name will be etched forever in textbooks teaching the current and future surgical procedures. Through laboratory training he offered opportunities to digestive surgeons safe way to minimize harm to patients in their surgical practice. He made contributions to new technologies and their surgical applications. He created a Training Center for Minimally Invasive Surgery in Tuebingen that is recognized worldwide.

These were his greatest contributions to the Digestive Tract Surgery: development and clinical application of new systems of esophageal dilatation with stents (1978-1985); development of TEM equipment (1980-1983); introduction of TEM in clinical practice; first endoscopic operation on the gastrointestinal tract by a surgeon (1983); development of an endoscopic equipment for microsurgical dissection of the esophagus; first clinical introduction of the technique of endoscopic esophageal resection (1989-1990) in Dundee Hospital; introduction of laparoscopic rectal resections in the routine clinical practice (1990); development of tools for multiple functions; development of mechanical suture instruments; development of the first robotic system; development of three-dimensional vision equipment, development of technologies and techniques for transvaginal procedures with rigid endoscope (2008); TEM as a precursor of NOTES.

As perspective to the future: "the surgeon operating alone" !

So was Buess, and, as he was called by Cuschieri, A MAN BEFORE HIS TIME!

He loved the life!

It was a privilege to be his friend!