



Musings of an old man

It is often said that to do the same thing repeatedly and expect a different result is a sure sign of madness. In this context, I worry about the sanity of senior surgeons. We agonise about the future of surgery – in particular its attractiveness to younger generations - and have undertaken a multitude of surveys over recent years to try to provide the foundations of a roadmap to solving the problem. Instead of effecting change, we have another survey in the hope that it will throw up some different responses. We ask the same questions and get the same answers every time. The largest single obstacle to surgical recruitment is its adverse effect on work/life balance. The profession is still largely constructed for the 'baby boomer' generation. We are a dying breed and unless surgery is refashioned to meet the needs and aspirations of Generations Z and alpha, we will have to accept that the future of surgery is doomed. It is therefore great to see that the Young ESTES (YESTES) initiative is thriving with more than 150 members. This is one of the great projects that the Society has launched in recent years. YESTES members are the future and it is important that they are given the space and support they need to thrive.

The NIGHTINGALE Project is a large-scale research and innovation project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme with which ESTES has been involved since its inception thanks to the skill and effort of Roberto Faccincani, the former chair of the ESTES Advisory Council. Our Disaster and Military Section is one of the few groups that is able to straddle the chasm between the military and humanitarian organisations that have so much in common when it comes to treating the injured in conflict or natural disasters, but often find themselves ideologically separated. Now in its final year, the project is on its way to developing a novel integrated toolkit for enhanced pre-hospital life support and triage in challenging and large emergencies – from which its name is derived. It has also provided the Society with the opportunity to dip its toes into the water at the European Union with recent invitations to participate in off-shoot meetings in Brussels.

The true mark of an organisation is how it fares in times of stress. ESTES survived the pandemic and grew stronger as a result. Working in collaboration with other organisations, ESTES was able to provide support to our colleagues in Ukraine within days of the Russian invasion in 2022. Having learned from that experience, we were able to do the same for our colleagues in Sudan within hours of the outbreak of civil war in 2023.

ESTES can also be proud of its role in establishing the European Trauma Course. The ETC Organisation is currently working in partnership with the World Health Organisation to provide practical training to trauma teams in Ukraine in 2024.

The importance of cooperation should not be understated. ESTES has signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the UEMS Divisions of Traumatology and Emergency Surgery to cement their relationships and mutual support for the future. The partnership with Conventus, our Professional Conference Organiser has been extended to provide certainty and stability for our Congresses and venues for the next four years have been agreed.

After twelve years on the Board of ESTES (beginning as Vice Chair of the Emergency Surgery Section) I will be stepping down at the Annual General Meeting in Lisbon. I have seen a lot of changes during that time and worked with some exceptional individuals. I am confident that ESTES is fit for the future and I have no doubt that it will continue to grow and develop to meet the needs of subsequent generations of Trauma and Emergency Surgeons. It is great to know that the organisation I have been honoured and privileged to serve is in good hands.

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