

The 11th National Congress of the Romanian Association for Endoscopic Surgery, the 13th Romanian National Symposium of BMS and the 3rd Romanian National Symposium of Robotic Surgery

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After two dreadful years of the pandemic, we were able to restore our face-to-face congress interactions this year in beautiful Timisoara, and we were delighted. This was readily apparent for the participants in the three main events hosted for 2022 by the Romanian Association for Endoscopic Surgery and Other Interventional Techniques (RAES) between 28th September – 1st October in Timisoara Convention Center: The 11th National Congress of the Romanian Association for Endoscopic Surgery, the 13th Romanian National Symposium of Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery and the 3rd Romanian National Symposium of Robotic Surgery.

The scientific partners who endorsed and collaborated for this prestigious biennial event were as follows: The Romanian Society for Metabolic Surgery (RSMS), IFSO - the International Federation for the Surgery of Obesity and Metabolic Disorders, iSMIT - the international Society for Medical Innovation and Technology, the Romanian Society of Coloproctology and Surgical Training Institute.

This year's Congress was chaired by Prof. Dr. Ciprian Duta and the general theme was "Minimal Invasive Surgery - Knowing better, doing better" to outline the educational purposes of RAES and the importance of continuous surgical education and improvement. In this regard, the scientific programme was indeed remarkable and included hands-on courses, face-to-face sessions, plenary sessions, technology symposia, video sessions as well as sessions dedicated to medical students and nursing staff.

On the first day of the Congress, Wednesday 28th September, the participants were able to attend four pre-congress courses. The first course was on basic laparoscopic skills for residents and young surgeons for them to gain the fundamentals of minimally invasive surgery. This course had an important hands-on component aimed at exercising manual dexterity, dissection techniques, suturing techniques, specific tasks at the pelvic trainer under supervision of expert laparoscopic surgeons.

The second course was aimed at Interventional techniques in Digestive Endoscopy where the participants had the opportunity to learn and perform different endoscopic techniques on animal models ranging from basic exploration and foreign body retrieval to haemostasis techniques, polypectomy, PEG tube insertion and Clips.

The third course – Robotic Surgery - involved the robotic platform, and the participants were able to experience and comprehend the potential and capabilities of the surgical robot, as well as to train on the console on experimental models. Moreover, robotic surgery was one of the highlights of the Congress with its dedicated National Symposium and, throughout the congress

The fourth course, entitled “Ultrasound for surgery” covered the core modalities of the specialty with extensive hands-on practice, lectures and clinical cases. Ultrasound, a technology that was formerly primarily the domain of radiologists, is becoming an integral part of the surgeon’s toolbox, a technological “third hand”.

Thursday, 29th September, began with a face-to-face session regarding management of main bile duct stones from gastroenterology (M. Tantau, Cluj-Napoca, Romania) and surgical (F. Turcu, V. Calu, Bucharest, Romania) points of view, with pros and cons of the techniques used. In the end of very interesting discussions, both laparoscopic and endoscopic approaches are complementary, and it’s a matter of training and availability of skills rather than the approach itself.

In the meantime, the question was whether

laparoscopic cholecystectomy is an easy operation, an interesting scientific session chaired by R. Madjov (Varna, Bulgaria), V. Tomulescu (Bucharest, Romania), I. Puia (Cluj-Napoca, Romania). In this session the speakers discussed pitfalls and complications (P. Chernopolsky, Bulgaria), safety (F. Turcu, Bucharest, Romania) as well as the approach in emergency (D.A. Brebu, Romania) of laparoscopic cholecystectomy.

In addition to the major issues in endoscopic surgery, the Congress included an important section on patient safety. Specifically, the topic that drew a great number of attendees was one devoted to the awareness and prevention of risks associated with the use of various kinds of energy - FUSE Symposium. Fire in the OR under the auspices of FUSE™ panel of experts: C. Copăescu (Bucharest, Romania), D. Ulmeanu (Bucharest, Romania), F. Turcu (Bucharest, Romania), M. Lițescu (Bucharest, Romania), R. Popescu (Constanța, Romania), B. Smeu (Bucharest, Romania) G. Filip (Bucharest, Romania), M. Păpurică (Timișoara, Romania), A.N. Stanciu (Timișoara, Romania). This topic is relevant in regards to the extensive hazards that may appear when misusing energy devices in the operating room and the lack of training which may lead to these hazards. Along the symposium the participants had the opportunity of a hands-on electrosurgery workshop with various devices and effects to be tested under the coordination of B. Smeu (Bucharest, Romania).

The RAES & SICE (Italian Society of Endoscopic Surgery and New Technology) joint session regarding minimally invasive treatment in the COVID era, was chaired by F. Agresta (Vittorio Veneto, Italy), G. Silecchia (Rome, Italy) and C. Copăescu (Bucharest, Romania). The highlight of the session were the results of the CRAC study – appendectomy in the COVID-19 era in Italy (F. Agresta) and the Cloud 19 study: impact of the outbreak on surgical activities in Italy (G. Silecchia). These studies revealed a significant impact on surgical services with a consequent reduction in surgical activity during the pandemic. Better health policies and guidelines are

needed to compensate for the surgeries not performed during this time.

Owing to the educational purposes of RAES, one of the most sought-after sessions was the How I do it – procedures. Education for young or not so young surgeons where step by step procedures were described in terms of Laparoscopic right hemicolectomy (V. Bințișan, Cluj-Napoca, Romania), Laparoscopic adrenalectomy (K. Sapalidis, Styliani Laskou, Thessaloniki, Greece), Laparoscopic splenectomy (R. Apostu, Cluj-Napoca, Romania) and Anterior laparoscopic rectal resection (V. Făgărașan, Cluj-Napoca, Romania).

One of the current hot topics and controversies in surgery is the surgical management of acute diverticulitis. This was extensively addressed by F. Agresta (Vittorio Veneto, Italy) during the “Sergiu Duca” Plenary Conference, who pointed out the present correct what and when surgical indications for acute diverticulitis surgery – lavage, primary anastomosis or Hartmann’s procedure.

In the session dedicated to Tips and tricks in gastro-esophageal minimal invasive surgery, directed by R. Pach (Kraków, Poland, M. Bjelović (Belgrade, Serbia), C. Duță (Timișoara, Romania), were presented new insights on esophageal anastomosis in the era of minimally invasive surgery (M. Bjelović, Belgrade, Serbia), as well as challenges in improving the minimal invasiveness of the surgical treatment for upper gastrointestinal cancer (Ciprian Duță Timișoara, Romania).

In the session devoted to colo-rectal pathology, teaching future surgeons in minimally invasive surgery was also an important aspect. In this regard, a valuable input came from countries such as Croatia (Education in laparoscopic colorectal surgery – ways to minimize complications – D. Karlovic Karlovic), United Kingdom (Artificial intelligence in surgery and training – M. Coleman), Serbia (National training program in laparoscopic colorectal surgery – results and perspectives, M. Čeranić) and Romania (Training in laparoscopic rectal procedures using a versatile 3D-printed pelvi-trainer – R. Elisei).

The National Symposium of Robotic

Surgery, was incorporated in the RAES Event and it was divided in two parts, being among the most remarkable sessions. This session was organized in partnership with The Romanian Club for Robotic Surgery and benefited from the experience of specialists with extensive experience in minimally invasive and robotic surgery such as C. Copăescu, V. Tomulescu, C. Duță, N. Crișan, E. Bratila, V. Radu from Romania, A. P. Labanaris from Greece, J. Douissard from UK, D.V. Matei from Italy. This symposium demonstrated the level of enthusiasm as well as RAES's interest in training the next generation of surgeons. There was a mix of discussion in regards to urological, gynecological hernia and colorectal surgery applications of the robot, especially by using the hybrid approach to facilitate the versatility of laparoscopy and the precision of the robot. The presentation held by Juan-Santiago Azagra Soria (Luxembourg, Luxembourg) - Moving from laparoscopy to robotic Whipple: a natural changing when both “expertise in MIS” and technologies are available – was very eloquent in this regard.

Furthermore, continuing the theme of surgical education, Mark Coleman (Plymouth, UK), Co-Director Lapco International Consultancy and National Clinical Lead for the Lapco National Training Program for laparoscopic colorectal surgery 2008-2014, addressed the current issues and perspectives of training in laparoscopic and robotic surgery at the Plenary Conference during the warm atmosphere of the Opening Ceremony. The conference was very important also in the perspective collaboration between LapCo UK and RAES in developing a rigorous and standardised training in laparoscopic colorectal surgery in Romania

Friday, 30th September, the second day of the Congress kicked off with the best videos and commented e-Posters sessions, moderated by A. Nicolau (Bucharest, Romania) A. Maghiar (Oradea, Romania), A. Dobrescu (Timișoara, Romania). The best three videos and /or posters would later be selected for a prize. The session opened with particular cases of fundoplication for GERD, (A. Nicolau, Bucharest, Romania)

and 3D laparoscopic inguinal lymphadenectomy (E.C Bujoreanu, Cluj-Napoca, Romania) which showed the advantages of a 3D perspective when dissecting in such a delicate anatomical area; the session then continued with Fluorescence guidance in minimally invasive colo-rectal surgery (C. Birlog, Bucharest, Romania) which showed the efficiency of ICG particularly when performing a safe colorectal anastomosis. The video session ended with an interesting case of Da Vinci X totally intracorporeal orthotopic ileal neobladder (E.C Bujoreanu, Cluj-Napoca, Romania).

Social media in surgery was an interesting topic as well, moderated by C. Tarță (Timișoara, Romania) and M. Plic (Timișoara, Romania) with talks given by C. Boru (Rome, Italy) - Why Social Media in surgery? and P. Ciccarelli (Latina, Italy) – An introduction to 2022's social media for surgeons. Over the past two decades, social media has had a significant impact on the transmission of science, debate of journal articles, and presentation of conference news. Immediate and real-time display of studies, papers, or presentations has flattened the hierarchy of participation, debate, and involvement. Surgeons should learn how to use cutting-edge communication technologies in order to develop the specialty and enhance professional and public contact.

Advances in MIS session demonstrated the current evolution of MIS in pelvic exenteration (JT Jenkins, UK) and the audience was then taken through the EAES Rapid Guidelines on surgical management of GERD and common bile duct stones by S.A. Antoniou (Thessaloniki, Greece). Other interesting presentations came from Z.A. Spârchez (Cluj-Napoca, Romania) – Ablation in liver tumors. Indications, results, complications, current standing in Romania and R. Popescu (Constanța, Romania) - Technical difficulties and particularities in the laparoscopic treatment of recurrent hiatal hernias.

Owing to the programme tailored towards advancements and future perspectives in MIS, the second day's plenary session – the “Corneliu Dragomirescu” lecture -, chaired by C. Copăescu (Bucharest, Romania), invited

Alberto Arezzo (Turin, Italy) General Secretary of EAES who outstandingly showed the road ahead of endoluminal surgery.

Another highlight of the day was a session on minimally invasive surgery for deep endometriosis in support of a multidisciplinary approach to various illnesses, chaired by V. Sîmedrea (Timișoara, Romania) and R. Munteanu (Bucharest, Romania) with engaging discussions facing opinions from GI surgeons, Urologists, Gynaecologists and Gastroenterologists.

The second day's “How I Do It” Session was about abdominal wall hernias, chaired by S. Mijatović (Belgrade, Serbia), D. Ulmeanu (Bucharest, Romania) and C. Tarță (Timișoara, Romania) with results of complex operations such as for recurrent inguinal hernias (R. Popescu, Constanta, Romania), laparoscopic inguinal hernioplasty after robotic prostatectomy (O. Arnautu, Bucharest, Romania), eTEP / eRS procedure for repairing multiple defects of antero-lateral abdominal wall (M.D. Hrițcu, Bucharest, Romania), as well as debates over open versus laparoscopic approach C. Tarță (Timișoara, Romania) or the TAPP approach of ventral parietal (D. Moga, Sibiu, Romania).

The iSMIT special session is a already tradition in RAES Congress. This year was focused on Ultrasound in surgery and it was chaired by C. Tiu (Câmpina, Romania), A. Melzer (Dundee, United Kingdom), S.A. Antoniou (Thessaloniki, Greece). Exceptional topics were presented: Robotic-assisted ultrasound-guided procedures, Ultrasound and MRI guided Focused Ultrasound Surgery (A. Melzer), Ultrasound guided surgical procedures (S. Filip, G. Filip (Bucharest, Romania), Training in image-guided liver procedures using gelatin and a 3D printed liver mold (R.C. Elisei and team, Romania). One promising educational platform is the MIREIA Project based on 3D anatomical and pathological models that can be printed and then used as an adjuvant tool and as a response of medical research to the lack of pathological models for training in minimally invasive surgery. This is highlighted by a collaborative between

Romanian, Spanish, Dutch and Norwegian teams.

These new technologies presented before will be embraced by young surgeons and such, their role was discussed in their dedicated session of “The role of young surgeons in the future of MIS.”, moderated by A. S. Boza (Seville, Spain), S. Pantea (Timișoara, Romania) and C. Bîrlog (Bucharest, Romania) with the participation of “EAES Young Members taskforce” of EAES.

In the afternoon, the Battle for gastric cancer session placed face-to-face the open approach (B. Diaconescu, Bucharest, Romania) with Minimally invasive surgery, laparoscopy & robotics (N. Ikoma, Houston, USA) and ended with an educational step by step presentation held by G. Pignata (Brescia, Italy).

Throughout the duration of the Congress, the exhibition area hosted a video marathon in which all accepted videos and e-posters were continuously broadcasted.

In concurrent sessions, satellite symposiums were held to discuss rising technologies such as the Versius Robotic System or Senhance robotic surgery, new high-definition solutions for endoscopy and portable ultrasound devices (Sonoscape) and innovative solutions for increasing patient’s outcome (Ethicon). The role of pharmacotherapy before and after bariatric surgery using Liraglutide (Saxenda) was presented, expected to offer weight control benefits.

Saturday, 1st October and the last day of the Congress, was dedicated to the National Symposium on Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery, an IFSO-endorsed event, organized in partnership with The Romanian Society for Metabolic Surgery (RSMS). The Event was opened by C. Copăescu, Director of the Symposium and it consisted of two very attractive scientific sessions. The first one focusing on Challenges of the Bariatric Surgery Programs, chaired by B. Smeu (Bucharest, Romania) and A.F. Cătoi-Galea (Cluj-Napoca, Romania) and the second one highlighting technical aspects & outcomes of metabolic surgery procedures and was chaired by C. Copăescu (Bucharest, Romania) and I.

Hutopilă (Bucharest, Romania). The first presentations brought out the difficulties in managing the bariatric patients and their complications during COVID19 pandemic in Romania (I. Hutopila, Bucharest, Romania), Luxemburg (Silviu-Tiberiu Makkai-Popa, Brașov, Romania) and Italy (Cristian Boru, Rome, Italy). The session continued with a hot topic of the day - Medical Tourism for Bariatric/Metabolic purposes – Pitfalls and consequences for the patients (C. Copăescu, Bucharest, Romania). The mechanisms beyond the metabolic surgery interventions were highlighted in two other interesting lectures: Plasma ghrelin levels after laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy can predict the long-term results (Amadeus Dobrescu, Timișoara, Romania) and The metabolic effect of total gastrectomy for cancer. Is it like in metabolic surgery? (Radosław Pach, Kraków, Poland).

The second part of the 2022 National Symposium on Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery, consisted of presentations about technical challenges or new procedures for bariatric patients: Stomach position after sleeve gastrectomy (Ionuț Hutopilă, Bucharest, Romania), Transhiatal migration after LSG: myth or reality? A multicenter, retrospective study on the incidence and clinical impact (Cristian Boru, Rome, Italy), Redo gastric sleeve with hiatal hernia repair and Narbona-Arnaud cardiopexy (Bogdan Smeu, Bucharest, Romania), N-Sleeve technique in bariatric patient with hiatal hernia and GERD (Răzvan Popescu, Constanța, Romania), Therapeutic approach of gastro-bronchial fistula after gastric sleeve – case presentation (Simona Filip, Bucharest, Romania), Minimizer ring – a solution to avoid regaining after metabolic surgery (Victor Diaconu, Bucharest, Romania) and Metabolic surgery for patients requiring lower-extremity joint arthroplasty (Clarisa Bîrlog, Bucharest, Romania).

The 13th Symposium of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery in Romania was successful in that it showed the advancements the field of metabolic surgery in the country by including thought-provoking panel talks on a variety of problems as well as novel surgical

procedures as part of its agenda. Moreover, during the R.S.M.S. General Assembly, aside to the current discussions and decisions of the association's members, the National Bariatric Registry was officially launched.

During the morning of Saturday, October, 1st a session dedicated to the students was organized. Chaired by Sergiu Bara (Timișoara, Romania), Gabriel Verdeș (Timișoara, Romania) and George Nodiți (Timișoara, Romania) it offered the young and enthusiastic colleagues the opportunity to present and discuss about very interesting topics: Robotic assisted surgery of esophageal cancer (Ariana Stoica, Timișoara, Romania), Robotic assisted surgery of gynecological cancers (Antonia-Maria Pop, Timișoara, Romania), Robotic assisted surgery of rectal cancer (Rareș Urlan, Timișoara, Romania), Intraoperative use of indocyanine, a favorable postoperative prognosis in patients with entero-mesenteric infarction (Andreea-Adriana Neamțu, Arad, Romania), ICG-guided colorectal cancer surgery – part of today's technology (Andreea-Adriana Neamțu (Arad, Romania), Laparoscopic surgical management of superior mesenteric artery syndrome: a brief review with a case report (Marco Capitanio (Timișoara, Romania) and Acute abdomen: Emergency surgery during the COVID-19 pandemic (Alexandra-Maria Nină, Timișoara, Romania)

The Friendship Dinner, was held at Recas wine cellar on Friday evening, and honours and awards were given to selected surgical teams to recognise the quality of their work, as follows:

E-Poster First Prize

“PROHEP-LCT robotic system for the treatment of unresectable hepatocellular carcinoma.” Emil-Ioan Mois, Doina Pîslă, Nadim Al Hajjar, Călin Vaida, Florin Graur,

Bogdan Gherman, Iosif Bîrlescu, Corina Radu, Peter Tucan, Nicoleta Plitea, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

E-Poster Second Prize

“Hybrid robotic-assisted laparoscopic pancreaticoduodenectomy: opening the doors to the future.” Bogdan Dumbravă, Bucharest, Romania

E-Poster Third Prize

“Sentinel lymph node technique using methylene blue in endometrial cancer” Gabriel Ioan Lazăr, Ionel Nati, Flaviu-Ionuț Faur, Adelina Ioana Clim, Cristina Mihaela Prodan Timișoara, Romania

Corneliu Dragomirescu Special Prize

“Emergency laparoscopic cholecystectomy”

Ovidiu Budișcă, Ahmed Sohaib, Valentin Strugari, Ludovic-Alexandru Szanto, Mihai Bălan, Izabella Varga, Daria Matache, Vladimir Bacărea, Bogdan Suciuc, Cosmin Nicolescu, Călin Molnar, Târgu Mureș, Romania

RAES Prize for new technologies

“eTEP / eRS procedure for repairing multiple defects of antero-lateral abdominal wall” Mihai-Daniel Hrițcu, Iyad Shahin, Bucharest, Romania

We are able to state that the RAES 11th Congress with over 400 participants in 23 sessions was a success, and we hope that the newly chosen executive team that have been elected at the RAES General Assembly will be brave enough to move on with at least the same level of success.

Looking forward for the next RAES National Congress, planned to be organized next year in 1-3 November, in Bucharest.