

# The 13<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Romanian Association for Endoscopic Surgery and Other Interventional Techniques & The 16<sup>th</sup> Romanian Symposium of Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery – Knowledge and Practice in MIS: the Education Imperative

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This year we were honored to host in Eforie Nord, at Ana Hotels Europa, between 24-27 September 2025, the 13<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Romanian Association for Endoscopic Surgery and Other Interventional Techniques (RAES), jointly organized with the 16<sup>th</sup> Romanian Symposium of Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery (RSMS). The Event was co-chaired by Prof. Răzvan Cătălin Popescu (President of the RAES 2025 National Congress) and Prof. Cătălin Copăescu (President of the 16<sup>th</sup> Romanian Symposium of Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery). The main theme of the meeting was: "Knowledge and Practice in MIS - the Education Imperative", highlighting the commitment of the society to advancing minimally invasive surgery through education, innovation, and international collaboration. The scientific program was intense and diverse, comprising an outstanding Masterclass on Rectal Surgery, three pre-congress hands-on courses, more than 30 scientific sessions across all MIS domains, plenary lectures, keynote addresses, and roundtables, video sessions and interactive debates, oral and e-poster presentations, and several industry-sponsored symposia.

The congress brought together over 300 participants, including surgeons, residents, and students, with a remarkable presence of young surgeons who actively engaged in both educational and scientific sessions. A total of 106 speakers and faculty members, representing 15 different countries, contributed to the scientific program, further strengthening the role of RAES and RSMS as leading regional platforms for MIS education and innovation. The event was supported by 22 partners and 5 sponsors, whose contribution was essential in maintaining the high scientific and educational standards of the meeting. The exhibition area featured national and international companies showcasing cutting-edge technologies in minimally invasive surgery - from advanced laparoscopic platforms, energy devices, and stapling systems to novel imaging equipment and robotic assisted solutions.

On September 24<sup>th</sup>, three pre-congress courses were held simultaneously in two locations – the Faculty of Medicine, Ovidius University of Constanța, and Ana Hotels Europa, Eforie Nord – and all of them were very well attended.

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The first course was “Basic Skills in Minimally Invasive Surgery”, directed by Valentin Calu (Bucharest). Designed for junior residents, this hands-on course introduced the fundamental principles of laparoscopic ergonomics and instrument handling. After a solid theoretical part, participants practiced in the dry lab and on box trainers, learning hand-eye coordination, camera navigation, and basic dissection skills. The second course was “Laparoscopic Suturing and Stapling”, coordinated by Răzvan Cătălin Popescu (Constanta). Intended for residents and young specialists, the program focused on one of the most demanding technical skills: intracorporeal suturing. Fourteen participants trained on biological tissue, practicing needle manipulation, intracorporeal knots, continuous sutures, and the use of linear staplers for anastomoses, under the direct supervision of expert trainers. The third course was “Ultrasound for Surgeons” led by Călin Tiu (Campina). Also held at Ana Hotels Europa, this interactive course reflected the increasing importance of ultrasound in surgical practice. Participants explored the basics of abdominal ultrasound, intraoperative applications, and postoperative monitoring, with demonstrations on abdominal organs and vascular structures.

The “Masterclass in Minimally Invasive Rectal Cancer Surgery,” chaired by Michel Adamina (Switzerland), was anticipated as one of the most educational highlights of the event. Hosted at Ana Hotels Europa, Eforie Nord, the course gathered an exceptional faculty of internationally recognized experts – Georgios Peros (Luzern, Switzerland), Caterina Foppa (Milan, Italy), Stavros A. Antoniou (Thessaloniki, Greece), Nader Francis (Yeovil, United Kingdom), Ludovica Baldari (Milan, Italy), Vasile Bîntătan (Cluj-Napoca, Romania), and Cătălin Copăescu (Bucharest, Romania) – who offered a comprehensive and practical overview of modern approaches to rectal cancer surgery. Through a series of live demonstrations, case-based discussions, and evidence-driven lectures, the masterclass explored advanced techniques in laparoscopic, robotic, and transanal rectal surgery. The debates focused on surgical anatomy, oncologic safety, management of anastomotic complications, and the impact of training and institutional experience on outcomes.

Participants had the privilege of engaging directly with leading experts who demonstrated step-by-step techniques, discussed critical pitfalls, and analyzed complex intraoperative scenarios. The course provided not only a deep dive into the technical nuances of rectal surgery but also emphasized the importance of performing such demanding procedures in specialized, high-volume centers, where multidisciplinary expertise ensures optimal patient outcomes. Through its combination of evidence-based lectures, interactive debates, and real-case discussions, the masterclass offered an exceptional educational experience, reflecting the commitment of the congress to advancing colorectal surgical practice through excellence and structured training.

On Thursday, 25 September, the scientific program opened with Session I – Educational Session – Young

ARCE, chaired by Nicoleta Leopa (Constanța, Romania) and Stefan Paitici (Craiova, Romania). The session brought together young faculty across subspecialties and set the educational tone of the meeting. The talks included: Training pathways – from resident to MIS expert by Draga Maria Mandi (Bucharest, Romania); Starting a surgical career by Radu Elisei (Bistrița, Romania); Learning curves in abdominal wall surgery by Ileana Geogloman (King's Lynn, United Kingdom); Learning curves in bariatrics and upper GI by Clarisa Bîrlog (Bucharest, Romania); Learning curves in colorectal by Cătălin Pîrîianu (Bucharest, Romania); Learning curves in HBP by Alexandru Martinuc (Bucharest, Romania); Non-technical surgical skills by Nicoleta Leopa (Constanța, Romania); and Overcoming hurdles: addressing barriers in surgical training for women by Ludovica Baldari (Milan, Italy). The lively discussion that followed underscored the importance of training pathways, learning curves across different domains, and the central role of NOTSS and inclusivity in shaping the next generation of surgeons.

Session II – Colorectal I, chaired by Miljan Čeranić (Belgrade, Serbia) and Florin Zaharie (Cluj-Napoca, Romania), gathered international and national experts to discuss the latest advances and challenges in colorectal surgery. Topics ranged from laparoscopic splenic flexure and extended right colectomies to robotic techniques such as transanal transection and subtotal colectomy. Presentations by Umberto Bracale, Miljan Čeranić, Florin Zaharie, Ciprian Duță, Ion Zeca, Vasile Bîntătan, Antoni Szczepanik, and Florin Grama outlined the evolution of minimally invasive colorectal surgery — emphasizing precise anatomy, oncologic safety, and individualized treatment, particularly in elderly patients.

Education took center stage in Session III – Training in MIS, chaired by Vasile Bîntătan (Cluj-Napoca, Romania) and Dorin Popa (Linköping, Sweden). The session gathered experts and educators dedicated to improving structured training in minimally invasive surgery, featuring presentations such as Training and education for robotic pancreatic surgery – Felix Nickel (Hamburg, Germany); The barriers in minimally invasive surgery training in Poland – Antoni Szczepanik (Krakow, Poland); and LAPCO-Ro: a continuous structured training program of laparoscopic colon oncologic surgery in Romania – Victor Tomulescu (Bucharest, Romania); Current status of training in robotic surgery in Romania – insights from the first fellowship program – Nicolae Crișan (Cluj-Napoca, Romania); CARLAP study – is this the way to get the driving license in Basic Laparoscopic and Suturing Skills? – Dorin Popa (Linköping, Sweden); and Gelatin-based liver phantoms for training purposes: a cookbook approach – oral presentation – Radu Elisei (Bistrița, Romania). The session brought into focus structured curricula, fellowship experiences, and simulation-based innovations.

A highlight of the first day was Session IV – Upper GI (Benign), chaired by Dan-Ioan Ulmeanu and Valentin Calu (Bucharest, Romania), which brought together

leading experts to discuss advances in the treatment of hiatal hernia and gastroesophageal reflux disease. The talks by Stavros A. Antoniou, Ion Zeca, Victor Diaconu, Dragoș Predescu, Călin Popa, and Cristian-Eugen Boru explored new guidelines, robotic and laparoscopic techniques, and the evolution of surgical practice in this field. The session concluded with a dynamic panel discussion on the use of mesh in hiatal hernia repair, underlining current debates and the need for a tailored, evidence-based approach to antireflux surgery.

The Sergiu Duca Plenary Lecture brought a moment of reflection on the legacy of one of Romania's pioneers in minimally invasive surgery. The session was introduced by Clarisa Bîrlog (Bucharest, Romania), who welcomed Ludovica Baldari (Milan, Italy) for her keynote presentation entitled "Image-Guided Surgery: Applications and New Perspectives."

In her lecture, Baldari explored the expanding role of imaging in modern surgical practice, illustrating how image-guided procedures enhance precision, safety, and oncologic outcomes. Her clear and forward-looking perspective on the integration of technology into surgery was highly appreciated by the audience and perfectly aligned with the educational spirit of the congress.

One of the most relevant and instructive moments of the program was Session VI – "Complications in Bariatric Surgery: Prompt Recognition and Treatment in the Emergency Room of a County Hospital." a joint session RAES and RSMS. Chaired by Cătălin Copăescu (Bucharest, Romania), Gil Faria (Porto, Portugal), and Dan Timofte (Iași, Romania), the session brought into discussion some of the most challenging postoperative scenarios that surgeons may face after bariatric procedures.

It opened with the presentation of the first RSMS-RAES National Survey on Bariatric Postoperative Complications (BARIACOMP2025), delivered by Valentin Calu and Cătălin Copăescu, offering a comprehensive overview of real-world data from Romanian hospitals.

The following case-based presentations – focused on septic, obstructive, and nutritional complications – underlined the importance of early recognition, timely decision-making, and multidisciplinary management. Particularly valuable for young surgeons, the session underscored the growing importance of developing these skills in the context of bariatric tourism, as many patients now present to emergency departments with complications following procedures performed abroad. It served as a strong reminder that understanding postoperative bariatric anatomy and its potential complications has become an essential competence for every general surgeon.

Session VII – Abdominal Wall, chaired by Octavian Arnăutu (Bucharest, Romania) and Dorin Popa (Linköping, Sweden), focused on the complexity of hernia repair and recent advances in minimally invasive approaches. Dorin Popa opened with "Emergency inguinal hernias and the laparoscopic approach. Why so rare?", followed by Ileana Geoglomán (King's Lynn, UK) with "To mesh or not to mesh in emergency situations."

Innovative techniques were highlighted by Radu Drașovean (Cluj-Napoca) on robotic ventral hernia repair, Petre Hoară (Bucharest) on TAPP for umbilical hernia, Călin Tiu (Câmpina) on the use of ultrasound, and Costin Duțu (Bucharest) detailing the LIRA procedure. Florin Turcu discussed tailored approaches for groin hernia, while Octavian Arnăutu concluded with managing complications in laparoscopic hernia repair. The session provided a concise yet insightful update on evidence-based and technologically driven abdominal wall surgery.

The first day of the Congress ended with the much-anticipated Session VIII – Common Session: Nightmare in the OR – Black Video Session, chaired by Nader Francis (Yeovil, United Kingdom) and Valentin Calu (Bucharest, Romania). The session captivated the audience with real-life "nightmare" cases and the strategies used to overcome them. Luigi Marano (Siena Italy) presented complex upper GI scenarios, followed by Benedetto Ielpo (Barcelona, Spain) with challenging HPB cases. Emre Balık (Istanbul, Turkey) shared demanding colorectal procedures, while Cesare Stabilini (Genoa, Italy) illustrated intricate abdominal wall reconstructions. The session concluded with Bijendra Patel (London, United Kingdom), who discussed troubleshooting complications in minimally invasive surgery. This "black video session" embodied the essence of surgical education – learning from complications, fostering open discussion, and reinforcing the importance of teamwork and composure in critical moments.

The Official Opening Ceremony of the ARCE 2025 Congress brought the first day to a close in a solemn yet inspiring atmosphere. Following the welcome addresses, Victor Tomulescu (Bucharest, Romania) introduced the distinguished keynote speaker, Prof. Nader Francis (Yeovil, United Kingdom). His lecture, "Rationale for robotic surgery and conventional laparoscopy in the future," captivated the audience with a visionary outlook on the evolution of minimally invasive surgery. Prof. Francis emphasized not competition but complementarity between robotic and conventional laparoscopy, underscoring that the future of surgery relies on balance, integration, and continuous education. His remarkable ability to blend scientific rigor with practical insight set an uplifting tone for the days ahead. The opening concluded under the sign of reflection and ambition, reminding all participants that genuine surgical progress arises from harmonizing innovation with rigorous training and sound clinical judgment.

The Eugen Nicolau Session, chaired by Valeriu Șurlin (Craiova) and Bogdan Diaconescu (Bucharest), honored the legacy of Prof. Eugen Nicolau, one of the pioneers of laparoscopic surgery in Romania, whose vision and dedication laid the foundations for modern minimally invasive education. Dedicated to minimally invasive approaches in abdominal emergencies, the session offered a comprehensive overview of current challenges and practical solutions. Among the most engaging moments were Bogdan Diaconescu's talk "Gallbladder from hell: a surgical survival guide," Florin

Iordache's overview of laparoscopic management of acute appendicitis during the COVID-19 era, and Alin Vasilescu's experience with laparoscopic repair of perforated ulcers. Călin Popa, Cătălin Piriianu, and Răzvan-Cătălin Popescu presented minimally invasive solutions for bowel obstruction and colorectal emergencies, while Vasile Bînțintan concluded with an innovative approach to esophageal perforations. Dynamic and practice-oriented, the session reaffirmed the central role of minimally invasive surgery in acute care and stood as a fitting tribute to Prof. Nicolau's enduring contribution to surgical progress.

Within the scientific program, Session XI – Upper GI, chaired by Ciprian Duță (Timișoara) and Dragoș Predescu (Bucharest), focused on recent advances and persistent controversies in the management of gastric and esophageal malignancies. Felix Nickel (Hamburg) and Erman Aytac (İstanbul) presented their experience with robotic gastrectomy for gastric cancer, while Vasile Bînțintan (Cluj-Napoca) and Dragoș Predescu (Bucharest) discussed minimally invasive approaches for esophageal cancer. Diana Schlanger (Cluj-Napoca) explored the limits and safety considerations of minimally invasive esophagectomy, and Tudor Mateescu (Timișoara) illustrated a video case on MIS treatment of diaphragmatic disinsertion. The session offered valuable insights into the ongoing evolution of Upper GI oncologic surgery, where technology, experience, and precision increasingly define surgical excellence.

Another memorable moment of the second day was the Cornelius Dragomirescu Plenary Lecture, dedicated to the memory of one of Romania's great pioneers in surgical education. Ciprian Duță (Timișoara, Romania) introduced Miloš Bjelović (Belgrade, Serbia), who delivered an engaging lecture entitled "The Future of Education: Disruptions and Emerging Transformations." In a forward-looking presentation, Dr. Bjelović explored the profound shifts reshaping modern medical education – from the integration of digital technologies and simulation platforms to the influence of globalization and new learning paradigms among younger generations. As he is currently the chair of the Education & Training Committee in EAES he also highlighted the great opportunities to learn and share knowledge offered by the European Association. His message underscored the need for adaptability, innovation, and lifelong learning to prepare the surgeons of tomorrow for an ever-evolving medical landscape.

The HPB session (Session XIII), chaired by Victor Tomulescu and Florin Botea, brought together distinguished experts from several European centers to discuss advanced minimally invasive approaches in complex hepatobiliary and pancreatic surgery. The session opened with Gill Faria (Porto, Portugal), who presented a comprehensive step-by-step guide to the Laparoscopic Whipple procedure, offering valuable technical insights for surgeons expanding into advanced pancreatic resections. Thilo Hackert (Hamburg, Germany) followed with an inspiring talk on Robotic pancreas surgery – extending the indications, illustrating

how technology and surgical expertise combine to enhance safety and outcomes in carefully selected patients.

Pavlos Antypas (Rome, Italy) addressed the delicate topic of Endoscopic management of bile duct injuries and leaks after surgery, emphasizing multidisciplinary coordination and timing as crucial factors for patient recovery. Florin Botea (Bucharest, Romania) shared his experience on Laparoscopic liver resections using intraoperative ultrasound guidance, illustrating how image navigation has become an essential pillar of precision in modern hepatic surgery. Rossen Madjov (Varna, Bulgaria) discussed the Management of colorectal liver metastases, underlining the role of laparoscopy in multimodal oncologic strategies and Alina Pușcasu (Bucharest), Traian Dumitrașcu (Bucharest), Florin Zaharie (Cluj-Napoca), and Iulian Moșteanu (Bucharest), each bringing national data and institutional experiences that reflected the remarkable evolution of HPB surgery in Romania. The discussions demonstrated the transition of minimally invasive techniques from selected cases to standard practice in specialized centers, reaffirming that precision, teamwork, and structured training are the foundations of progress in HPB surgery.

The session Surgery and Social Media, chaired by Draga-Maria Mandi (Bucharest, Romania) and Cristian-Eugeniu Boru (Rome, Italy), brought a modern and forward-looking dimension to the congress. Sertaç Ata Güler (Turkey) opened with a presentation on Medical visual documentation, underlining how ethical and esthetic standards in surgical imagery enhance both communication and scientific value. Cristian-Eugeniu Boru followed with Artificial Intelligence in Social Media: from post to scalpel, exploring how AI algorithms are transforming surgical education and outreach. Draga-Maria Mandi highlighted the educational and collaborative potential of digital platforms in Surgery goes viral, while Bijendra Patel (London, United Kingdom) discussed how Digital Surgery improves both technical and non-technical performance. The session concluded with Ruxandra Marian (Bucharest, Romania), who emphasized the importance of authenticity and transparency in building trust through social media. Integrating technology, ethics, and education, the session reflected how digital transformation is reshaping modern surgical culture.

In parallel with the RAES scientific program, the 16<sup>th</sup> Romanian Symposium of Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery (RSMS) unfolded across six highly engaging sessions. The event gathered leading national and international experts to discuss innovation, complexity, and everyday realities in metabolic and bariatric surgery. The opening session, "The Challenging Bariatric Surgery – Video Session," chaired by Bogdan Smeu (Bucharest, Romania), showcased remarkable clinical cases and commented e-posters illustrating intraoperative challenges and their solutions. Diana Stănescu presented a compelling case of gastric torsion after sleeve gastrectomy and Răzvan-Cătălin Popescu addressing postoperative hemorrhagic complications.

Yazan Abu Zeid discussed intraoperative mishaps in bariatric surgery, while Gil Faria (Porto, Portugal) introduced reduced-access bariatric surgery using a 3-port technique. The session concluded with Angelo Iossa (Rome, Italy), who explored robotic SADI-S as a refined and reproducible approach for complex metabolic procedures. Dynamic, technically rich, and deeply educational, the opening RSMS session set the tone for a symposium dedicated to advancing safety, precision, and multidisciplinary collaboration in bariatric surgery.

The second RSMS session, Bariatric & Metabolic Surgery as a Bridge to..., chaired by Ionuț Huțopilă (Bucharest, Romania) and Cristian-Eugeniu Boru (Rome, Italy), explored the expanding role of metabolic surgery beyond weight loss – as a preparatory step for complex surgical interventions. Angelo Iossa (Rome, Italy) opened with an insightful talk on bariatric surgery as a bridge to organ transplantation, followed by Cătălin Copăescu (Bucharest, Romania), who discussed its benefits before hernia repair. Silviu-Tiberiu Makkai-Popa (Brașov, Romania) demonstrated its impact in orthopedic recovery, while Clarisa Birlog (Bucharest, Romania) addressed the delicate topic of bariatric surgery in children and adolescents. The session offered a forward-looking perspective on how metabolic surgery can optimize outcomes across various surgical disciplines.

The Presidential Session included an exceptional keynote lecture delivered by Gianfranco Silecchia (Rome, Italy), entitled “Obesity and Colorectal Cancer.” Introduced by Cătălin Copăescu (Bucharest, Romania), Prof. Silecchia provided an in-depth analysis of the complex relationship between metabolic disorders and malignancy, showing how obesity influences tumor biology, surgical difficulty, and long-term outcomes. His presentation skillfully combined clinical data with preventive and therapeutic perspectives, offering valuable insight into one of the most pressing challenges at the crossroads of metabolic and oncologic surgery.

Within the RSMS program, Session IV – Interdisciplinary management of patients with obesity, led by Florinela Cătoi-Galea (Cluj-Napoca, Romania), Miloš Bjelović (Belgrade, Serbia), and Dan Timofte (Iași, Romania), explored the complexity of obesity care and the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration. Doina Catrinoiu (Constanta, Romania) opened with OBESITY on the edge, addressing the clinical and psychological challenges of severe obesity, followed by Florinela Cătoi-Galea (Cluj-Napoca, Romania) with Weight regain after bariatric surgery – an MDT task, underlining the crucial role of multidisciplinary teams in postoperative follow-up and relapse prevention. Cristian-Eugeniu Boru (Rome, Italy) presented Gut microbiota: the true impact of the hidden organ, offering insight into microbial influences on obesity. The session concluded with the Iași team’s study on The impact of bariatric surgery on oxidative stress, emphasizing the biological benefits of metabolic surgery, presented by Ancuta Miler.

Session V – GERD and Hiatal Hernia, chaired by Angelo Iossa (Rome, Italy), Ciprian Dută (Timișoara,

Romania), and Răzvan-Cătălin Popescu (Constanța, Romania), explored the complex overlap between bariatric and foregut surgery. The talks by Miloš Bjelović, Gianfranco Silecchia, Ionuț Huțopilă, Victor Diaconu, and Gil Faria addressed diagnostic standards, technical refinements, and strategies to prevent post-operative reflux after bariatric procedures. The session concluded with the RSMS Cup – Management of Challenging Cases, chaired by Rubin Munteanu and Cătălin Copăescu, which encouraged active discussion and teamwork through real clinical scenarios – one of the most interactive moments of the day.

In a session filled with practical experience and real-life surgical dilemmas, Session VI – Challenging Situations in Bariatric Surgery, chaired by Victor Diaconu (Bucharest) and Amadeus Dobrescu (Timișoara), brought to the forefront the complexity of managing high-risk metabolic patients. Loredana Bărbulescu (Bucharest) opened the discussion with “Metabolic surgery in patients aged over 60: a valuable strategy for comorbidity control?”, exploring safety and outcomes in elderly populations. Gil Faria (Porto, Portugal) followed with Ambulatory bariatric surgery, presenting evidence on patient selection and perioperative management. Simona Filip (Bucharest, Romania) discussed Revisional bariatric surgery – redo sleeve and SASI-S after gastric sleeve, highlighting the technical challenges and long-term outcomes of reinterventions. Daniel Andrei (Bucharest, Romania) elaborated on Hiatal hernia repair during gastric sleeve, while Bogdana Bănescu (Bucharest, Romania) shared a case report on Late-onset gastro-pleural fistula after revisional surgery. The session concluded with a compelling presentation by Sertaç Ata Güler (Istanbul, Turkey) on Endoscopic VAC treatment for sleeve leakages, emphasizing the importance of minimally invasive management in post-operative complications.

The day concluded with the RAES General Assembly, a defining moment of continuity and renewal within the Association. During this meeting, Dan Ulmeanu, the outgoing President, officially handed over leadership to Victor Tomulescu, marking the transition to a new chapter in the evolution of the society. The General Assembly also marked the renewal of the ARCE Board, with the inclusion of a dynamic new generation of surgeons from across Romania. Vasile Bințințan will lead the Education Department, Daniel Preda will coordinate Research and Publications, Draga-Maria Mandi will head the Committee for International Relations and Communication, Radu Elisei will oversee the Technology and Innovation Committee, and Nicoleta Leopa will coordinate the Young ARCE Committee – a team reflecting commitment of ARCE to continuity, mentorship, and forward-looking leadership. At the same time, Călin Tiu was designated as President-Elect, ensuring a seamless continuation of the mission of RAES to promote excellence in minimally invasive surgery and education. The event was marked by a spirit of unity and commitment to innovation, education, and collaboration – values that have defined RAES since its foundation.

The General Assembly (GA) of the Romanian Society for Metabolic Surgery brought together the active members of the Association. The GA was chaired by the current RSMS President, Cătălin Copăescu and the reports of the President, General Secretary, Treasurer and of each Committee chair were presented and approved by the GA. The ongoing educational initiatives and future collaborative projects, and outline strategic directions for the next term were discussed and approved.

The final day of the RAES 2025 Congress concluded with the highly practical "Step by Step Procedures" session, chaired by Răzvan-Cătălin Popescu, Ciprian Duță, and Dan-Ioan Ulmeanu. The program offered structured demonstrations of key laparoscopic techniques – inguinal hernia repair, appendectomy, and hiatal hernia – presented by Valentin Calu, Octavian Amăuțu, Valeriu Surlin, Florin Iordache, Vasile Bințințan, and Răzvan-Cătălin Popescu. Focused on technique, safety, and surgical refinement, this final session perfectly reflected the congress's spirit – education through precision and shared experience.

The Educational Corner for Young Surgeons, chaired by Victor Tomulescu and Andrei Popa, brought the final day to a close with a series of complex and instructive laparoscopic cases. Supported by an expert panel, the speakers highlighted technical challenges and innovative solutions, offering valuable insights for the next generation of minimally invasive surgeons.

The last scientific session of the congress, Colorectal and Robotic Surgery, chaired by Florin Grama and Silviu-Tiberiu Makkai-Popa, showcased the most advanced approaches in minimally invasive colorectal surgery. The presentations covered robotic total mesorectal excision, splenic flexure mobilization, and CME for left-sided colon cancer, complemented by insightful video cases and original studies from national centers. Particularly notable were the contributions on fluorescence-guided surgery and comparative analyses between laparoscopic and open approaches, emphasizing how precision technology continues to redefine oncologic outcomes and surgical safety. This closing session summarized the technological excellence and educational mission that defined RAES 2025.

Throughout the congress, five poster sessions were held, showcasing a wide range of clinical and research topics. The quality of the presented works was outstanding, reflecting both scientific rigor and the growing interest of young surgeons in the field of minimally invasive surgery. Interactive discussions between authors and evaluators further enriched these sessions, turning them into a genuine platform for knowledge exchange and professional dialogue.

The scientific excellence of the congress was further emphasized by the awards granted for outstanding presentations. The Best Video Presentation was awarded to Dr. Alexandru Dosa (Fetești, Romania) for "Laparoscopic management of biliary ileus: two rare cases of small bowel obstruction and enterolithotomy, combined with cholecystectomy and fistula repair." The Best Oral Presentation – "Corneliu Dragomirescu" Award was received by Dr. Andreea Ancașu Miler (Iași, Romania) for "The impact of bariatric surgery on oxidative stress in obese patients." The prestigious Adrian Lobontiu Award, recognizing innovation and technical mastery in minimally invasive surgery, was presented to Dr. Andrei Cioacă (Bucharest, Romania) for "Robotic resection of an exophytic splenic cystic tumor with inter-splenogastric-pancreatic extension – en bloc." Finally, the Best e-Poster Presentation was awarded to Dr. Dan Vălean (Cluj-Napoca, Romania) for "Minimally invasive treatment of Morgagni hernia with transfascial suturing technique: tips and tricks."

The 13<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Romanian Association for Endoscopic Surgery and the 16<sup>th</sup> Romanian Symposium of Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery concluded in an atmosphere of academic excellence and professional fellowship. The joint event brought together leading experts, educators, and young surgeons from Romania and abroad, fostering a dynamic exchange of knowledge and experience. By integrating advanced clinical practice with educational innovation, the congress reaffirmed the role of RAES and RSMS as national and regional leaders in the development of minimally invasive and metabolic surgery. It stood as a testament to the continuous commitment of both societies to promote surgical education, scientific research, and high standards of patient care.