

Foreword

Minimally Invasive Mitral Valve Surgery

This issue of the *Annals of Cardiothoracic Surgery* is devoted to Minimally Invasive Mitral Valve Surgery. It is our tremendous honor to introduce our Guest Editors, Professor Friedrich Mohr and Professor Martin Misfeld, of the Leipzig Heart Center in Germany. The Leipzig Heart Center has a reputation for pioneering robotic and video-assisted mitral valve surgery and has the world's largest series in video-assisted mitral valve surgery.

Professor Mohr performed the world's first robotic mitral valve repair with Professor Alain Carpentier in 1998. His contributions to the field have been extraordinary; the institution that he created and leads has completed around 4,300 port-access mitral procedures, with over half performed by Professor Mohr himself. Professor Mohr trained at the University of Bonn and the University of Berlin in Germany, then at the University of New South Wales in Australia before taking up residency in Bonn. But it was, in fact, in Poland where he first caught the cardiac surgery bug, while undertaking an elective in Gdansk with Professor Mirosława Narkiewicz. There he saw one of the first cardiac operations performed in Poland, an atrial septal defect repair, and from that moment his fascination with cardiovascular surgery was born. He began working in cardiac surgery but then took some advice that was to equip him with a set of unique skills that has differentiated him from other cardiac surgeons to this day. The advice given to Professor Mohr was to work in cardiology. He therefore went to Los Angeles and did a fellowship in laser angioplasty and angioscopy. This ability to interact with both cardiac surgeons and cardiologists has defined major parts of his career, including the creation of Heart Teams in his pioneering work with TAVI and also vital collaborations in the SYNTAX, EXCEL and PARTNER Trials.

During his early career in the USA, Professor Mohr often went to the Texas Heart Centre during his vacations to watch Professor Denton Cooley. The smooth control and technical dexterity of the operations he watched continue to provide a source of inspiration for him to this very day. He returned to Germany and took up an Associate Professorship in Goettingen. In 1994, he was offered a full chair in surgery in a new unit called the Leipzig Heart Center. Shortly after starting there, he was offered other more prestigious positions, which he turned down. *'People told me that I was crazy. Why did I want to work in this unit in Eastern Germany when I could work in one of the top units in Western Germany? But I had a vision to set up a unit as great as the Texas Heart Center which is the reason that I stayed'*. He has certainly achieved and possibly surpassed this vision, with many now regarding the Leipzig Heart Center to be the greatest heart surgery centre in the world. Pioneering surgeons such as Randy Chitwood, Michael Mack and Randy Wolf all came to learn from his unit before setting up their own programs. The center employs more than 1,400 staff including over 20 senior surgeons and 60 surgeons in training, performing over 6,000 operations per year. Remarkably, 1 in 6 senior surgeons in Germany are trained in Leipzig!

Professor Misfeld is the Professor of Cardiac Surgery and Associate Chief of the Leipzig Heart Center. After graduating from the University of Hamburg with a Medical License Certificate, he undertook training at the Curschmann-Clinic and cardiothoracic specialist training at the Medical University of Luebeck, Germany. In recognition of his exceptional surgical performance and extensive research into the vasoactive behavior of aortic valve structures, he has been endowed with the prestigious titles of "Medical Specialist for Cardiac Surgery," "Habilitation" and "Venia legend". Professor Misfeld also holds the positions of Associate Professor of Cardiothoracic Surgery at the University of Sydney, Honorary Visiting Medical Officer at Royal North Shore Hospital, Sydney, and Leading Senior Cardiac Surgeon and Head of Minimally Invasive Cardiac Surgery in the Department of Cardiac and Thoracic Disease at the University of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany.

Thus it is with great pleasure that we invite you to read and enjoy this very special edition of the *Annals of Cardiothoracic Surgery*. We hope you will also enjoy the interview with Professor Friedrich Mohr (*Video 1*) and the insights provided by our contributors into the operation that they have pioneered. We thank all of our eminent contributors for their tireless work and extraordinary contributions to the field of minimally-invasive mitral valve surgery.

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