

Urology training in Turkey and the activities of Turkish Urological Society of Residents (T.Ü.A.B.)



Emre Huri
NCO Turkey (Ankara)
emrehuri@yahoo.com

Dear Residents,

On behalf of Turkish Urological Society of Residents (T.Ü.A.B) I should like to give some insights in the Turkish urological training programme and residency.

In Turkey a considerable number of medical students opt to enrol in a residency training programme. This also applies for the speciality of urology, and in Turkey the urologists/population ratio is 1:45,000. The current number of urological residents is 498; all are ESRU Members according to the most recently collected data (2005). A urological residency takes up 5 years and this period includes the rotations to other departments (3 months anaesthesia, 6 months general surgery, 3 months nephrology, emergency and optional departments). 52 university hospitals and 20 training hospitals provide the academic education. The licenced training hospitals are generally located in Turkey's larger cities, such as Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir and Bursa. However, Turkey has three EBU Accredited Urology Departments, the Hacettepe University of Ankara, the Akdeniz University of Antalya and the Istanbul University.

It is not easy to be accepted as a urological resident in Turkey; one has to pass the Medical Residency Examination (TUS) which can be taken by medical graduates twice each year. This examination helps to ensure the quality of senior urologists and overall only 10% of the medical students participating pass the examination. Graduates who pass do not have to wait to start their residency training; before the examination one can select a maximum of 14 departments one wishes to train at and, according to the exam results, he or she can start the residency training programme in one of these selected departments.

As part of the residency training programme, one has to participate in a residency qualification examination in the residents' own institute which generally consists of a thesis presentation, an oral exam and a surgical assessment. This exam is officially organized by the Ministry of Health and the exam committee (also appointed by the Ministry of Health) is responsible for proper preparation. Additionally, since 2004, a Turkish Board of Urology Examination is offered every year by

the TÜYK (the Turkish Urological Accreditation Committee) aimed at optimizing education and updating the knowledge in urological training. In order to prepare for the board exam, the National Urological Board Committee has for the past 2 years been organizing a preparatory course which is an intensive education programme dealing with all subspecialties of urology. It may be compared to the current EUREP Courses organized by the EAU. This course consists of modules on oncology, paediatric urology, female neurourology, endourology, andrology, trauma and specific and non-specific genitourinary infections. It takes 4-5 days and all final-year residents and young urologists can attend the course. At this moment, the sub-specialist programmes are not yet regularly included but the aim is to ensure covering the main topics such as oncology, andrology and paediatric urology on a routine basis. At the various host departments which are generally major university hospitals, or through exchange programmes, residents can obtain optional training in the urological subspecialties.

In Turkey, the resident's clinical and surgical practice training level will strongly depend on the input of the urology departments' directors, staffs and technical equipment available. At the moment there is no standard curriculum for urological training. Also, there are great differences between patient numbers when comparing the university hospitals with the training hospitals. There is not too much variety between hospitals related to types of surgical procedures residents are to train for, which is resulting in a steady standardization of surgical training. However, some endourological procedures such as percutaneous nephrolithotomy and laparoscopic surgery are not performed at all hospitals for a number of reasons, but due to the selective rotation between clinics residents have the opportunity to get acquainted and practice with those procedures. In Turkey many departments use log-books to evaluate the residents' educational status.

With the support of the Turkish Association of Urology and the Ankara Association of Urology, monthly resident education programmes are organized that include lectures, literature sessions and case report discussions. Although the meetings are generally organized in Istanbul or Ankara, many residents and urologists travel to attend these activities. But also the national congresses, symposiums and courses held on the various urological subjects contribute to schooling residents and urologists. It is also true that in Turkey globalization and standardization significantly contribute to the increasing quality of surgical training.

Clinical or experimental studies or any research activities are generally overseen by



The cities located in the marked sections (brown) have a regular urology training programme.

the clinical directors, and residents interested in being involved in a research programme during their residency are generally able to do so, also getting to collaborate with pathologists and laboratories. Overall, participation in clinical/research studies in one's residency period will be very helpful when applying for an academic position upon certification as a full urologist. Urological departments collaborate in multicentric trialing activities.

A typical day for a resident starts at 06.00-07.30 a.m. and finishes at 16.00-18.30 p.m. In case there is a lot of work in the department, working days may be longer. During the day, each resident has assigned duties (operating rooms, outpatient clinic, ESWL etc.) but the systems in place and the kind of work to be done at the various teaching and university hospitals may differ considerably. We are 'on call' 6-15 days depending on the number of residents in a department and the type of hospital. At the large centres especially rotations at the emergency service department may affect residents' working hours. The approximate income of a resident in Turkey is 1,000 YTL (680 Euro) per month supplemented by 500 YTL (340 Euro) for night duties, but it may vary depending on the type of hospital.

There is a close collaboration between universities and teaching hospitals to provide information on urological sub-specialties. In general, most of the departments focus on general urology although some include special training in urological subspecialties. Especially endourological procedures (PCNL, ureterorenoscopy, TUR etc.) are very well represented in all urological departments. Laparoscopic surgery is becoming more popular in some departments, however, surgical procedures related to female-neurourology and andrology are performed by qualified departments only. Radical operations, especially prostatectomies and nephrectomies are carried out in nearly all departments.

The Turkish Association of Urology (T.Ü.D.) was founded in Istanbul in 1933. The members have to be urologists to participate in the activities of the association. The Turkish

Urological Association of the Residents (T.Ü.A.B.) established in 1996, organize their activities independently of the Turkish Urological Association. They also collaborate with the ESRU. The presidents of the T.Ü.A.B. are elected at the National Urological Congress for a period of two years. The main tasks of the T.Ü.A.B. representative are improving communication between residents, supporting any urological activities, congresses and courses, announcing scholarships and grants and working closely with the ESRU; acting on a national level but keeping a global perspective. We have set up two Yahoo accounts to communicate with the residents and the membership list was only recently updated using the Turkish Residents Database. An official journal and resident's website are on the list of plans of the T.Ü.A.B. Up till now, we selected one resident representative in each urological department to facilitate communication. However, all residents are welcome to enter the EBU in-service examination and join the EUREP Courses. Attendance of the residents was 20, 25 and 35 in 2003, 2004 and 2005 respectively; however, according to the official website of the EBU, there are currently 16 EBU fellows in Turkey.

We hope that the 'Residents Corner' in European Urology Today will help achieve standardization and optimization of urological training and education among the European Urological Departments by presenting and sharing ideas on urological activities. This new section should also improve communication between residents all over Europe.

Finally, we thank our friend, Dr. Stéphane Larre, who is the first and new section editor of this important column, and wish him all the best. We are looking forward to seeing all European residents again in Turkey.

Many greetings from Turkey!

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