



SVAKE GODINE KROZ BEOGRAD PROĐE VELIKI BROJ STRANIH UROLOGA SA ŽELJOM DA UNAPREDE SVOJE SPOSOBNOSTI. RAZLOG JE JEDNOSTAVAN - U OVOJ OBLASTI HIRURGIJE, SRPSKI DOKTORI SU DALEKO ISPRED SVOJIH INOSTRANIH KOLEGA. TO POTVRĐUJE I RAZGOVOR SA SPECIJALISTOM UROLOGIJE DR VLADIMIROM KOJOVIĆEM

piše: Slavko Stefanović

BEOGRAD NA MAPI TRANSRODNE HIRURGIJE

Svega četiri dana je bilo dovoljno Petrosu Cafrakidisu iz edinburškog Univerziteta Sent Endrjuz i Atanasosu Ekonomuu iz Univerzitetske bolnice u Larisi da dođu do dva laskava zaključka. Prvo, iako su prvi put kročili u srpsku prestonicu, ocenili su da je kao „grad na Balkanu koji se mora videti“ zbog kulturološke bliskosti i zanimljive istorije. Drugo, beogradska škola rekonstruktivne urologije ih je kao urologe inspirisala svojim velikim brojem slučajeva i ogromnim iskustvom. Iza ovih utisaka se krije doktor Vladimir Kojović, srpski urolog kojeg nazivaju „svetski poznatim“. S pravom, čini se. Našli smo se u novotvorenoj bolnici Euromedik na Novom Beogradu gde su se pripremali za ulazak u operacionu salu. „Njegovo iskustvo dobro prevazilazi uobičajene okvire, a njegov veliki integritet je u saglasju s gostoljubivošću i toplinom srpskih kolega i s njihovim humanim pristupom. Nije reč samo o sticanju suvog znanja kao na nekom seminaru ili kursu, već se dobije ceo paket“, kaže doktor Ekonomu. Doktor Cafrakidis je saglasan da je beogradska škola rekonstruktivne urologije bez premca. „Same operacije ne zahtevaju tehnološke novitete i svuda u svetu se rade isto. Njihov uspeh otuda zavisi isključivo od veštine hirurga, a ona se ne može kupiti“, zaključuje on.

Ovi grčki urolozi su samo neki od petnaestak urologa koliko ih svake godine dođe u Srbiju na edukaciju. Doktor Kojović kaže da očekuje dolazak dvojice kolega iz Južne Afrike, a potom i iz Švajcarske. Ono što su, recimo, Rusija za očnu hirurgiju i Hjuston za kardiohirurgiju, Beograd je za rekonstruktivnu urologiju. Drugim rečima, brend, stecište, svetska prestonica transrodne i genitalne hirurgije.

Na pitanje o kontekstu u kojem se Srbija proslavila u ovom pogledu, doktor Kojović odgovara da je najzaslužnija duga, pionirska tradicija. „Prvu zvaničnu operaciju promene pola u Beogradu uradio je 1987. godine istinski vizionar, profesor doktor Sava Perović, praktično osnivač beogradske škole rekonstruktivne urologije. Imao je ogromnu energiju, o operacijama je razmišljao bukvalno neprestano, a tehnike je osmišljavao pre no što su uopšte postojale. Imati 32 godine dugu tradiciju nije mala stvar, naročito s obzirom na njenu pionirsku dimenziju. Slične operacije su se tada radile na svega nekoliko mesta u svetu. Od tada je kroz Beograd prošlo mnogo pacijenata i kolega i sada je omogućeno kolegama iz celog sveta da boravak u Beogradu bude u vidu zvanične edukacije u oblasti transrodne i genitalne hirurgije“, kaže doktor Kojović, koji je i asistent na Katedri za hirurgiju Medicinskog Fakulteta u Beogradu.

Svake godine se u Srbiji obavi veliki broj transrodnih operacija. Ako se konverzija genitalija vrši iz muških u ženske, operacija se obavlja u jednom aktu. Međutim, ako je smer suprotan, često je za punu konverziju potrebno dva do tri akta kako bi se formirale potpuno funkcionalne muške genitalije.

Doktor Kojović je oklevao kad je upotrebio termin „promena pola“. „Duboko je pogrešno koristiti ga, ali je previše čest u svakodnevnom govoru. S medicinske tačke gledišta, mi vršimo hiruršku konverziju genitalija, odnosno usklađujemo genitalije s pravim polom pacijenta, pa je sada je legitimno reći da radimo „operaciju potvrde pola“, komentariše on. Razlog je jednostavan – kada se dete rodi, društvo mu dodeljuje rod u zavisnosti od izgleda

genitalija. U većini slučajeva, dodela je ispravna. Međutim, u nezanemarljivom postotku od oko 0,6 odsto, jednako zastupljenom u svim epohama i na svim meridijanima, mentalni pol i dodeljeni pol nisu u saglasju. Razlog – čista fiziologija. Muške i ženske genitalije su istog embriološkog porekla – potiču iz istog „pupoljka“ koji u jednom trenutku u toku intrauterinog razvoja bude usmeren ka jednom od dva pola. U retkim slučajevima ova „skretnica“ razvoja genitalija bude usmerena na stranu pogrešnu u odnosu na nepromenjivi moždani „rodni imprint“.

„Reč je dakle o urođenom problemu koja onemogućuje normalan, srećan život i kao takvog ga treba i posmatrati. Recimo, 41 odsto transrodnih osoba ili pokušaja ili nažalost izvrši samoubistvo. Oni koji to ne učine najčešće svakako nemaju ispunjen život. To je životna borba koja počinje od ranog detinjstva“, kaže doktor Kojović.

„Sudbina svakog pacijenta predstavlja zaseban dugometražni film“, kaže u šali, ali jedna je naročito napravila dugoročan utisak, delom zato što se s njom susreo pri početku karijere. Bila je to dvadesetsedmogodišnja Peruanka iz Lime koja je rođena kao muškarac. Imala je svega pet godina kada je shvatila da nije ono što njeni roditelji misle da jeste. „Vidite, deca u Peruu u školu kreću baš u tom uzrastu, a razredi su rodno isključivi. Kad je završila u razredu prepunom dečaka, našla se u stanju šoka. Tog trenutka petogodišnja Peruanka je shvatila da nije ono za šta je smatraju roditelji i okolina“, kaže doktor Kojović.

„Česta zabluda o transrodnim osobama je da je njihovo stanje hir. Niko se ne muči toliko od ranog detinjstva zbog hira. Dolaze nam iz celog sveta i iz svih zaleđina. S mnogim pacijentima sam ostao u kontaktu i pratio sam ih kroz sumnje, nesigurnosti, suze radosnice i društveno prihvatanje. Veoma je važno naglasiti da se operacija potvrde pola ne može izvršiti na maloletnim osobama i da je reč tek o prirodnom zaključku dugog procesa koji počinje s najmanje jednogodišnjom psihijatrijskom evaluacijom koju prati endokrinološka hormonska terapija“, dodaje on.

Republički zavod za zdravstveno osiguranje pokriva veći deo troškova pacijentima iz Srbije, a strani pacijenti i dalje plaćaju manje no drugde u razvijenom svetu. Ekonomski aspekt se ne sme zanemariti, ali je kvalitet rada je ono što Srbiju čini svetskom prestonicom transrodne hirurgije. U društvu konzervativnom koliko je srpsko – dakle mnogo –, doktor Kojović priznaje da je i sam isprva imao izvesne rezerve i dileme. „Moj profesionalni put je počeo i dalje je vezan za dečiju hirurgiju i hirurgiju urođenih uroloških anomalija. Iako sam imao određene rezerve i dileme, bio je dovoljan jedan ozbiljan razgovor s pacijentom da shvatim veličinu njihove borbe. Od tog trenutka, samo me je interesovalo kako da im pomognem. Još jedan trenutak je mnogo uticao na promenu svesti o transrodnim osobama i hirurgiji – pre nekih dvadesetak godina, pokojni patrijarh srpski Pavle se susreo s doktorom Perovićem i nakon razgovora je odlučio da podrži stručni tretman transrodnih pacijenata. Patrijarh srpski gospodin Pavle je tada, i pacijentima i lekarima, dao blagoslov za njihovu veliku borbu“, priseća se doktor Kojović.

Društvo i dalje treba da prihvati ono što je srpski crkveni velikodostojnik bio davno prihvatio. Još je važnije to što se naši doktori nalaze u prvim redovima ovog procesa, što to stručna svetska javnost vidi i što im odaje zasluženo priznanje.

BEOGRADSKA ŠKOLA REKONSTRUKTIVNE UROLOGIJE JE BEZ PREMCA U SVETSKOM KONTEKSTU

Capital of Serbia - capital of transgender surgery

EVERY YEAR, NUMEROUS UROLOGISTS PASS THROUGH BELGRADE WANTING TO IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS. THE REASON IS SIMPLE – SERBIAN DOCTORS ARE WAY AHEAD OF THEIR COLLEAGUES IN THIS FIELD OF SURGERY. THAT IS VERIFIED THROUGH THE CONVERSATION WITH UROLOGY SPECIALIST DR VLADIMIR KOJIVIĆ.

by Slavko Stefanović

Only four days in Belgrade were enough for Petros Tsafarakidis from University of St Andrews in Edinburgh and Athanasios Oeconomou from University hospital of Larissa to come to two flattering conclusions. Firstly, even though it was their first time in the Serbian capital, they thought it was well worth a visit, a "must-see city in Balkans" in which they felt culturally familiar and intrigued by local history. Secondly, being urologists, they found the Belgrade school of reconstructive urology very inspiring due to its vast experience and a large number of cases. Behind these impressions lies their host Dr. Vladimir Kojović, a Serbian urologist whom they called "world-famous". Rightly so, it seems. We all met in the newly opened Euromedic hospital in New Belgrade where they were preparing to enter the operating theatre. "His experience goes far beyond any standard comparison. His great integrity matches the hospitality and warmth of Serbian colleagues and their humane approach. So, coming here isn't about gaining just dry knowledge through a seminar or a course, it's the whole package", says Dr. Oeconomou. Mr. Tsafarakidis concurs that Belgrade school of reconstructive urology is peerless. "The procedures themselves don't require any technological advances – they are pretty much the same anywhere in the world. So its success depends exclusively on the manual skills of the surgeon and you can't put a price on that", he concludes.

These Greek urologists are only a small part of urologists who come to Serbia every year to further their skills. Dr. Kojović says that two colleagues from South Africa are expected to come as well; a couple of them from Switzerland too. What Russia is for eye surgery and what Houston is for heart surgery, Belgrade is

for reconstructive urology. In other words, a brand, a meeting point, the world capital of trans-gender surgery.

When asked about the context in which Serbia became famous in this particular regard, Kojović pins it to the long, pioneering tradition. "The first official sex-change procedure in Belgrade was performed in 1987 by a true visionary, professor Dr. Sava Perović, practically the founder of Belgrade school of reconstructive urology. He had an immense energy, he thought about procedures literally all the time, he came up with techniques before they even existed. So having a 32 years long tradition is no small feat, especially since it was truly a pioneering work. Similar procedures were being performed only in a handful of other places. A lot of patients and colleagues have passed through Belgrade since then and now they are enabled to attend an official education in the field of transgender and genital surgery", says Dr. Kojović, assistant professor of surgery at School of Medicine, University of Belgrade.

Numerous transgender surgeries are performed annually in Serbia. If conversion of genitalia is male-to-female, it's a one-stage procedure.

However, if it's the other way around, a full conversion can take two to three procedures to achieve fully functional male genitals.

Dr. Kojović hesitated a bit when he used the term "sex-change". "It's really wrong to use that term, but it's too frequent in common language. Medically speaking, we're performing surgical conversion of genitals in order to match genitals with the real gender. It is officially legitimate to say 'sex confirmation surgery' which I think is the most appropriate", he comments. The reason is simple – when a child is born, the society assigns a gender depending on its genitals. Most of the time, this works well. However, in a non-negligible percentage of around 0.6%, spread

BELGRADE SCHOOL OF RECONSTRUCTIVE UROLOGY IS PEERLESS IN GLOBAL CONTEXT



evenly across epochs and meridians, assigned gender is wrong. The reason – pure physiology. Male and female genitals have the same embryological origin – they come from the same "bud" which, at a certain point of intrauterine development, switches towards one of the two sexes. In some rare instances, this turn goes in the wrong direction and it then doesn't match brain's sexual imprint.

"It's a congenital problem which disables any form of normal, happy life and it must be treated as such. For instance, some 41% of transgender people either commit suicide or try to kill themselves. Those who don't usually don't end up having a fulfilling existence. It's a life-long battle that starts at a very young age", says Dr. Kojović.

"Every patient I encounter deserves a feature film", he says jokingly, but one in particular made a lasting impact, partly due to the fact that she came to him at the beginning of his career. It was a 27 years old Peruvian woman from Lima who was born as a man. She was only five years old when she realized she wasn't what her parents thought she was. "See, in Peru, kids go to pre-school at that exact age, and classes are gender-exclusive. When she ended up in an all-boys surrounding, she fell into a shock. At that moment, she realized she was not what her parents thought she was", says Dr. Kojović.

A huge misconception about transgender people is that their state is a whim. Nobody suffers that much since early childhood because of a whim. They come from all over the world and from

all sorts of backgrounds. I stayed in touch with many of the patients and I followed them through doubts, insecurities, tears of joy and social acceptance. It's really important to note that sex confirmation surgery can't be performed on under-age people and that it's just a natural conclusion to a long process which starts with at least one year of psychiatric evaluation, followed by endocrinological hormonal therapy", he adds.

National Health Insurance Fund covers the majority of costs for Serbian patients and foreign patients still pay less than elsewhere in the world. Economic aspect must not be underscored but the quality of work is what makes Serbia the world capital of transgender surgery. In a society as conservative as Serbian, Dr. Kojović admits to having had certain reserves. "My professional path started with pediatric surgery and surgery of congenital urological anomalies and is still tied to those fields. I had some dilemmas but it took me one serious conversation with a patient to comprehend the scope of their struggle. From then on, I was only interested in helping them. One more instance had a big impact on the change of perception of transgender people and surgery – some twenty years ago, the late Serbian Patriarch Pavle had met with Dr. Perović and, after a talk, he decided to support medical treatment of transgender people. He blessed both patients and doctors in their huge struggle", recounts Dr. Kojović.

The society still needs to accept what a Serbian church dignitary had accepted long ago. More importantly, the Serbian doctors are at the forefront of this process, the world sees them and pays them due recognition.