

ВСТУПИТЕЛЬНОЕ СЛОВО



I am honored to have been asked to write a short introduction to this special issue of the Russian Journal of Neurosurgery.

I think back to when we started doing Gamma Knife surgery in 1968. This was 17 years after my father Lars published his 1951 paper in which he in theory described how stereotactic radiosurgery might be realized. When the first prototype of the Gamma Knife was installed at the private Sophiahemmet Hospital in Stockholm, we were full of enthusiasm and we of course believed we were doing something important. We did not, however, expect the rest of the world to easily embrace this new and non-invasive way of treating disorders of the brain. I vividly remember the Indian Neurological Society meeting in 1969. I was there to speak about the first 6 or 7 patients we had treated on the prototype in Stockholm. When I finished my talk there was an uproar in the audience – “*who is this charlatan, throw him out!*” and “*it’s preposterous to think that you can do something in the brain without a craniotomy!*” The chairman of the meeting gently led me out of harm’s way and dropped me off outside the convention center. Neurosurgical colleagues felt threatened by this new development. After all, how can there be a better instrument than our own hands? During the subsequent two decades the same sentiments, for different reasons, were voiced by other specialties, mostly otolaryngology and radiation oncology. We were ahead of the times – it was simply too early!

In fact, it would take many more years before the Gamma Knife made inroads in countries outside of Sweden. The second machine was installed at the Karolinska Hospital in 1975. It would then take another 10 years before two more machines were installed, one in Buenos Aires and another one in Sheffield, UK. During Christmas of 1985 I asked my father how many more Gamma Knife units he thought would be needed in the world. His answer – “*maybe one or two more*”.

The year after he had passed away in January of 1986 a third installation was completed. This was in the fall of 1987, when the first United States Gamma Knife was put in operation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This installation suddenly changed things and in short order there were other installations happening in Chicago, Rochester, Charlottesville and other places in the United States. In 1990 the first Gamma Knife in Japan was installed at Tokyo University – and the trend continued in the subsequent years...

The first Russian installation was in 2005 at the Burdenko Neurosurgery Institute in Moscow. This was soon to be followed by several other installations, in St. Petersburg, Khanty-Mansiysk, Obninsk, Moscow and Novosibirsk. It’s fair to say that Russia wasn’t among the early adopters but instead chose a more careful approach, waiting for the peer reviewed long-term clinical results to show the benefits of radiosurgery, and for which indications it excelled. The result of this approach is impressive! As I write this well over 20.000 patients have been treated in Russia.

In early 2016 Sklifosovsky Institute installed their own Gamma Knife. Already in the first year they treated a large number of patients and in terms of number of patients treated so far, the Institute ranks as one of the top performers in the Russian Federation. One particularly attractive feature of the Sklifosovsky Institute is that it is the only center in Moscow that is integrated with the city’s Department of Health. This enables them to treat patients without financial means, at no cost.

I have always been of the opinion that if you want to achieve something, no matter how difficult it may be, you need first of all to **believe**. You also need to be **tenacious** and finally you need to **persevere**. It also helps to be humble with your detractors and to have confidence in your results. The efforts of the whole neurosurgery team at Sklifosovsky is a brilliant testament to this philosophy.

I want to wish all members of the Sklifosovsky department of neurosurgery the best of luck with everything that lies ahead of them!

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