



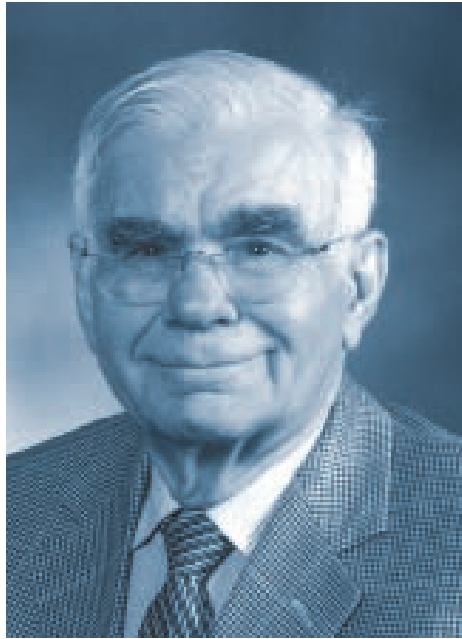
Honor to Whom Honor Is Due

Volker Seifert, M.D., Ph.D. describes the Carl Zeiss Honorary Lecture and Visiting Professorship initiated and hosted by the Department of Neurosurgery of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University

Modern microneurosurgery owes its existence not only to a combination of key technological and application developments, but also to the contributions of a select group of pioneering neurosurgeons. Recognizing their achievements and the importance of the medical field, the Department of Neurosurgery of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, initiated and hosted an honorary lecture series and visiting professorship co-sponsored by Carl Zeiss.

Modern microneurosurgery was created and shaped by three defining aspects: the development of special microneurosurgical techniques, the emergence of the surgical microscope, and the exact reappraisal

and visualization of the complex microneuroanatomy from a surgical viewpoint. It was also shaped by three surgeons who played a decisive role in stimulating microsurgery and defining the direction it has



M. Gazi Yasargil, M.D.

taken right from the outset: Professors Gazi Yasargil, Majid Samii and Albert L. Rhoton. These renowned surgeons can truly be described as “giants of microneurosurgery.”

In the mid-1990s, I started to think about how these founding fathers and early developers of modern microneurosurgery could be honored within an academic university framework. The Carl Zeiss company offered its services as a partner and co-sponsor, and gave its name to this initiative. In my opinion, no other company is so inextricably linked to the development of the surgical microscope and microtechnology.

Together with Harvey Cushing, Professor Gazi Yasargil has been rightly honored as the neurosurgeon of the 20th century. Without Gazi Yasargil’s pioneering achievements, modern microneurosurgery would certainly not exist in the form in which we practice it today. Not only was it his fundamental idea to use the surgical microscope consistently in all surgical procedures on the brain, and to constantly enhance its design. It was also his principle, on the basis of an in-depth understanding of microanatomy, particularly the anatomy of the brain’s basal cisternae, to use an approach based on

maximum anatomical orientation and minimally traumatic exposure of the site of surgery. This is demonstrated not only in numerous scientific publications, but also, and above all, in his six-

volume lifework “Microneurosurgery” – and also, of course, by the huge number of patients he has helped with his surgical genius. Many microneurosurgeons, and I am one of them, have frequently visited Professor Yasargil’s hospital in Zurich, Switzerland, and spent many hours in his operating room. I conducted many long and fruitful discussions with him there, to which I think back with great pleasure today. In view of Professor Yasargil’s very close relationship with Carl Zeiss and his direct influence on the development of the surgical microscope, it was a great pleasure to commend him as the first honorary lecturer.

At a ceremony held at the Frankfurt University Hospital on September 21, 2004, Professor Yasargil gave the first Carl Zeiss Honorary Lecture titled “Origin, Development and Future of Microneurosurgery.”

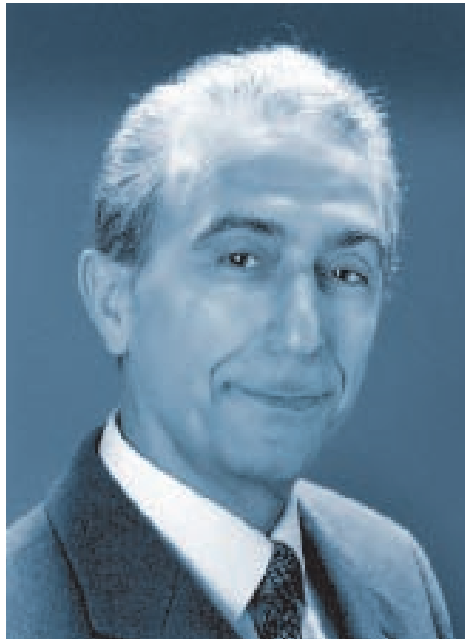
One year later, Professor Majid Samii was the second lecturer selected for this honor. There can be no doubt among surgeons that the importance

of Professor Samii's clinical and scientific lifework for the daily work of neurosurgeons around the globe is comparable to that of Professor Yasargil's achievements. Over the decades, the focus of

Professor Samii's work has been, and continues to be, surgery of complex processes of the skull base. His achievements are centered in particular on the field of difficult tumor identities such as petroclival meningiomas and, of course, surgery of acoustic or, as it is now correctly termed, vestibular schwannomas. Apart from his direct impact on skull base microsurgery, Professor Samii is also seen as one of the great visionaries of neurosurgery. By founding the International Neuroscience Institute in Hanover, Germany, he laid the basis for concentrating all areas of neuromedicine in one location: from the experimental neurosciences, basic research, clinical research and clinical-surgical routine, to the development of future-oriented projects such as neurobionics.

During the award ceremony on October 26, 2005, Professor Samii gave a lecture titled „Challenges of Neurosurgery in the Future.“

Professor Albert L. Rhoton was the third honorary lecturer to be invited. As previously noted, modern



Majid Samii, M.D., Ph.D.

microneurosurgery has been shaped not only by the development of the surgical microscope and the emergence of micro-neurosurgical techniques, but also, in the past twenty years, by an increasingly

profound understanding of the extremely complex microanatomy. No other surgeon has contributed more to modern, surgically oriented microanatomy than Professor Albert L. Rhoton. With his staff and guest physicians, he has worked out practically the entire microanatomy of the brain and documented it in wonderful drawings and photos. All responsible neurosurgeons repeatedly refer to this excellent work not only during their training to become neurosurgeons, but also in everyday practice. It is described and combined in detail in the book „Cranial Anatomy and Surgical Approaches“ which covers Professor Rhoton's lifework.

I have always found it impressive how Professor Rhoton derived his intraoperative microsurgical approach from his studies in microanatomy and presented it in his written work. Anyone leafing – or even better, working through his book – will soon be overcome by the wealth of information, and in particular, by the instructive anatomical illustrations.



Albert L. Rhoton, M.D.

During the award ceremony on November 25, 2006, Professor Rhoton gave a lecture titled "The Art and Beauty of the Brain – Reflections of a Neurosurgeon."

With this lecture, Professor Rhoton ended the series of Carl Zeiss Honorary Lectures. The Carl Zeiss Honorary Lectures honored the achievements of the three key founding fathers of modern microneurosurgery. Although the actual honorary lectures have now been concluded, the lecture series focus on microneurosurgery will be continued. At the same time as the Carl Zeiss Honorary Lectures were ended, therefore, the Carl Zeiss Visiting Professorship was created. Twice a year, in the spring and in fall, world-renowned clinical neurosurgeons with special expertise in microneurosurgery will be invited to Frankfurt, Germany, for several days as guest professors. The event is combined with lectures and, where necessary, with workshops and joint operations with the guest professor.

The major goal is to convert the one-time lecture into the dynamic form of a Visiting Professorship in order to also welcome and honor outstanding microneurosurgeons of the younger generation within a university and academic framework here at the

Frankfurt University Hospital. The first Carl Zeiss Visiting Professor in the spring of 2007 was Professor Necmettin Pamir, professor and chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery at the Marmara

University in Istanbul, Turkey. He was a guest at our hospital from April 16-19, 2007.

We think that, with this new approach, we have found a way of further intensifying the many years of cooperation between outstanding microneurosurgeons, Frankfurt University Hospital and Carl Zeiss. At the same time, we would like to create a forum where current and future advances in microneurosurgery can be presented within an academic framework.

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