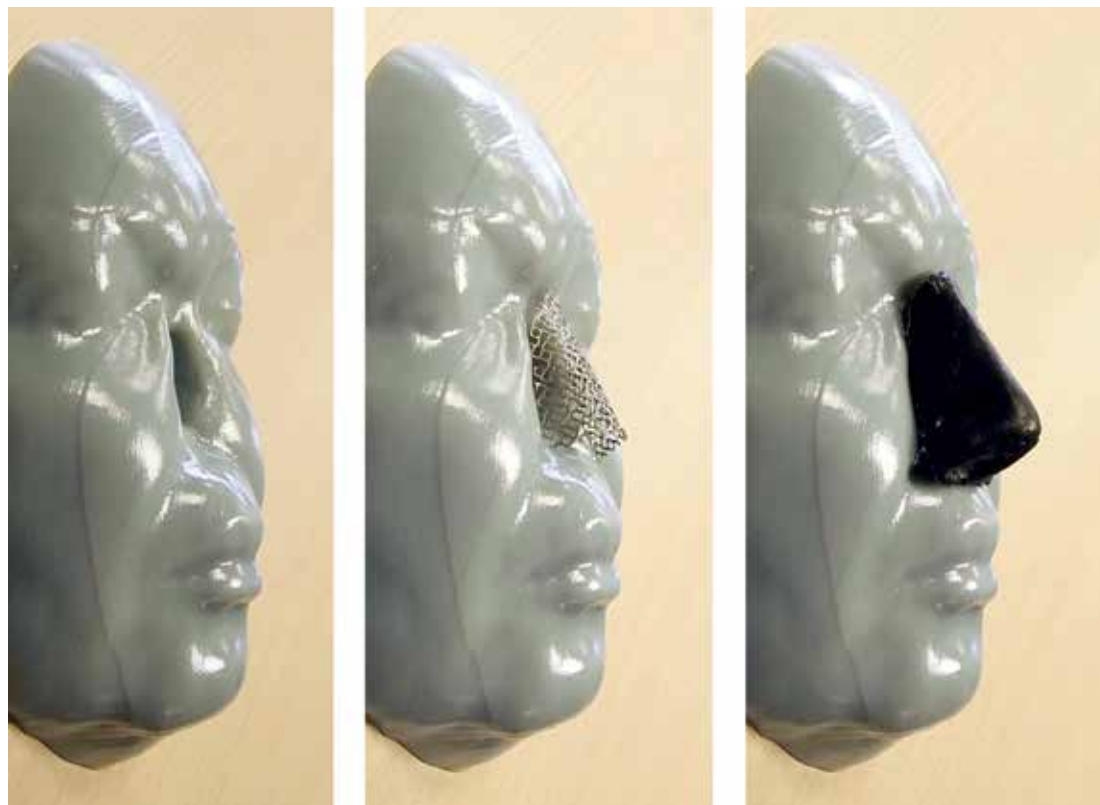


Interview: Prof. Uroš Ahčan, M.D., PhD. is a head of Clinical Department of Plastic, Aesthetic and Reconstructive Surgery Ljubljana.

Supermen in Today's Knowledge-oriented e-Society: Case of Reconstructive Surgery

By **Lucija Mulej Mlakar**



Prof. Uroš Ahčan, M.D., PhD. is a head of Clinical Department of Plastic, Aesthetic and Reconstructive Surgery Ljubljana. He is also inventor and writer, totally dedicated to his mission and vision. In his private Praxis Juventina Clinic his holistic approach helps many. (www.juventina.si)

Q Professor Ahčan, the knowledge society opens new possibilities, an escape from the digitalised, virtual and "unhuman" context of post-modern, digital holographic e-societies. What is your strict and scientific definition of knowledge?

A In medicine, knowledge is addressed as "evidence-based medicine", profoundly rooted in neutral data collection with body-time narratives. Yes, the body is our domain, the biology perspective, chemistry foundation and psychology just a supplementary science. We need to act, react, heal and rescue. Our knowledge is always supported with real life cases and requirements, and the luxury of philosophical thinking, though attractive and meaningful, is an open space for wonder, laughter and feelings of belonging in rare and special moments. That comes along with my family, my wife and two daughters, and good friends, where my mind is at ease and my heart is still and words do not need to be spoken. Digitalisation is probably the opposite. Sometimes, creating obstacles for a human touch, for the magic of a moment "when two eyes meet", for mutual feelings of belonging and purpose. At other times, technological support is indispensable, such as in microsurgery. Technology should be supportive not omnipotent, striving to control

our minds. As we see with our youth, technology is misleading, leaving no space for creativity, spontaneity and the development of social skills.

Q Your field of expertise is hard core science, where numbers, weights, percentages and reckonings prevail. What about the subjective parts of the medical agenda?

A You are right, surgery is body fixing and healing is just the first step, we are unaware of what is in a patient's mind. Still, we can rely on our intuition, inner sensation and anticipation of what might come next. But this is still just guessing, isn't it? I had one operation years ago, we treated a skin tumour where the patient was in hypnosis with the help of hypnotherapist, which I firstly doubted I must say. The patient was without any medication, under the supervision of an anaesthesiologist and all my surgical cuts, electrocautery and stiches were performed as in general anaesthesia. There was no movement of the patient, no side effects, blood pressure and heart rate weren't altered. So, phenotype plays a role, as does healing ability. In all my cases, the same operation or procedure and techniques, team endeavour and support does not deliver the same results. There is more to question about the subconscious effects of the

mind and body, and science needs to delve into a more profound investigation of phenomenon aside from well known physical characteristics.

Q As a world-renowned surgeon and thinker, where do you see your future role as a doctor, surgeon and Chief of the University Clinical Centre for Reconstructive and Plastic Surgery, Ljubljana?

A Being a head of department, there is sometimes too much paperwork and administrative conundrums. Occasionally, one can merely rely on expertise, teamwork and a good working spirit between colleagues. Most MD's are totally overwhelmed with their passion, sub-specialty and eagerness to always learn. Yes, we overcome budget cuts and human intolerance with our energy, passion and our patients healing, giving us fuel for our mission. My future role will remain in my dedication to my specialisation, profession and vision of what is best for my patients. Medicine can give so much more, especially when it is subjected to mutual results, progress in the field and a multi-disciplinary approach, yielding new knowledge. Connectivity of basic sciences with technology is a future paradigm shift for medicine! Technology supports advanced apparatus and mobilises silent forces and solutions of a new kind.

Q Sociology of science, especially relating to novelties and inventions, states that the right work culture and personal background creates optimal contexts for success, where Slovenia seems to be special. Records show you have many heroes and heroines, people of high level of performance in sports, science, medicine ect. As psychoanalysis states, suppression unfolded is a pathway to immortality? What is your secret?

A For example, permissive, indulgent and pleasure-seeking parenting where parents are very involved with their children, placing just few demands or controls on them, nurturing and accepting all kinds of needs and desires, support virtual and e-societies, where almost everything is created by itself. With no inner quest, you state distrust or conflict, no space for establishing active self, e.g. actor, is present. And initiative, coming from deepest frustration is sometimes critical angle for novelties and yes, solutions. If we are not confronted with problems and riddles that for example medicine and surgery are full of, we are not forced to investigate, create, think and adjust. If we do not use our organs and muscles, their ability to function reduces. Use of our skills and capabilities make us stronger, more successful and resistant to all sorts of stress in unpleasant

situations. As in all aspects of life, we notice less abundance generates resilience, where agility, as a personal characteristic, is always in line with the ability to make the right decision in critical times - when lives are threatened, with complex malformations such as trauma or cancer. Slovenia is certainly a safe and picturesque country with many opportunities and our history has shown that we have strong personalities. We live together for centuries and I believe in the power of teamwork and a multidisciplinary approach with no artificial or irrational boundaries.

Q You shaped a miracle, the first in the history of plastic surgery, you explored and designed a project of nose shaping in accordance with 3D prints on a patient's hand...? Would you be able to repeat this kind of brilliance in another, richer environment?

A In this case we used some old methods, known for more than 2,500 years, reconstructive surgery and microsurgery techniques known for decades with new technological advanced 3D animations, planning and model printing where free tissues were used to make a new nose. It was routed on a patient's forearm where it healed as a well-designed, autologous body part. With a team of surgeons and other experts, we created the right environment for the right result. Miracle is maybe the consequence of good synergy, the right will, mutual respect and total trust.

Q What is your suppression? Can positive anger be a mobilizing force to overcome human imperfections and system defects?

A I think I am old enough to make mature steps, responsible decisions and my holistic understanding of the world gives me inner strength to accept my imperfections and forgive slips to my circle of colleagues and friends.

Q Do you see any parallels between entrepreneurs and surgeons?

A The same as surgeons, entrepreneurs need ideas, create opportunities, work hard and be an example. A tough job, but full of blessings of all kinds.

Q What about breast cancer; many new techniques, methodologies and raisons d'être have been introduced in recent decades. Also, your team of specialist gave some important and new insights to the very relevant topic.

A Contemporary medicine is open to all possible solutions, with minimum invasive and

optimal supportive techniques and methods to protect people in most possible ways. Breast cancer is contemporary women disease number one. Every eighth woman suffers under breast cancer which means every eighth family is experiencing secondary trauma. Breast cancer is therefore important factor for happiness index measurement since contemporary societies are faced with new health challenges. Today we have profound knowledge in treating this disease, like surgical techniques with free tissue transfers and microsurgery with almost 100 % successful rate. Here we have support of modern technologies, like 3D cameras, 3D bio printing, offering us improvements and best possible solutions and results. We have a 3D method patent where we scan and measure the healthy breast, then create model and new breast from patients own tissues, taken from the abdomen. Due to this method, cancer operations are more standardized, predicted and safer with greater functional and aesthetic results.

Q One citation in your book states: "According to the latest information from Forbes, the highest paid models could renounce one yearly payment of US \$45m and bring a smile to the faces of at least 5,625 women". This is a strong comparison. When do you have time for book writing?

A I believe in knowledge and in vivid experience; I certainly do not support google knowledge seekers. The book, "Breast cancer and the best reconstructive options" is dedicated to women and their families, where everything regarding surgical treatment, breast reconstruction, diagnosis and paths of recovery are explained, yielding answers, support and real cases where women show and explain their way out of anxiety and trauma. ◀

Link: www.newbreast.eu



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