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Further education and training for plastic surgeons

Plastic surgery, which in fact comprises plastic, aesthetic and reconstructive surgery, is a discipline that is undergoing steady and rapid development. Reconstructive surgery in particular must be understood as an integral part of many other surgical specialties, since its services are needed, for example, when patients suffer from serious defects and need plastic reconstruction after oncological resections or traumas. For this reason plastic surgeons get used to interdisciplinary discourse and challenges right from the beginning of their training. Such an interdisciplinary approach requires flexible and far-sighted thinking, but above all the special ability to communicate with specialists from other disciplines. A broad medical training is therefore of crucial importance to every plastic surgeon.

The courses and training possibilities available should thus be carefully selected with a focus not only to highly specific knowledge but also with an eye to practical training, offered in the framework of courses and workshops. Unfortunately the cost of such courses often goes far beyond the financial means of average, underpaid surgeons in training.

It is nevertheless advisable to persevere by seeking third-party funds or other means of funding because the exclusive exchange of knowledge provided by these courses is an invaluable asset.

The possession of several national and international course diplomas might soon count as entitlement to take the medical specialist exams, as it is being discussed in many countries. In any case, such course diplomas serve as an important criterion for the career of every surgeon.

In the era of globalisation and mobility it is especially advisable to take the EBOPRAS exam, the European specialist exam, which is held once a year in a European city and which is preceded by several days of in-depth courses. While the diploma is accredited by all EBOPRAS members, it does not, however, count as a substitute for the national specialist exams. Some countries are currently considering to replace the national exam with the international EBOPRAS exam, while others are taking efforts towards harmonising the national exams in order to phase out the European exam. Since this will be a process of many years, it would be best to take both the national as well as the European exam, despite the cost involved.

The EBOPRAS Association also carries out visitations of training centres for plastic surgery throughout Europe and is entitled to award accreditations. A diploma from one of these

EBOPRAS “Accredited Training Centres” certainly counts as a valuable reference in every curriculum.

Many international associations of plastic surgery organise annual courses themselves or take on the patronage of selected regional courses and events. A diploma from a course or programme which has been held under the aegis of international associations should therefore be regarded as an excellent reference.

www.ebopras.org (European Board of Plastic Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery)

www.euraps.org (European Association of Plastic Surgeons)

www.espras.org (The European Society for Plastic Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery)

www.ipras.org (International Confederation of Plastic Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery)

www.wsrn.net (World Society for Reconstructive Microsurgery)

www.handsurgery.org (American Association for Hand Surgery)