

Press release

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„Vascular International“ – a worldwide leader for the training of vascular surgeons on simulators

Ahead of the times Vascular International Foundation and School (VI), headquartered in Switzerland, has become an international elite school for vascular surgeons from all parts of the world. It was founded 21 years ago and offers practical hands-on training courses on simulators, supervised by one of Europe's leading and well-known vascular surgeons. The models are worldwide recognised as most innovative and realistic enabling the course participants to practise open vascular surgical and endovascular techniques in a stressfree environment. 2011 another important step towards internationalisation was undertaken by launching the VI courses in the USA. **Mehr Informationen:** www.vascular-international.org

When VI was founded in 1991, the simulation of surgical techniques were completely unknown. Back then, the first realistic simulation devices caused a sensation and are now continuously improved.

„These anatomically correct simulators enable trainees to learn and train complex surgical techniques under the supervision of experienced vascular surgeons. Most importantly the learning experience takes place in a stressfree environment enabling the trainees to focus on important technical issues,“ says **Univ.-Prof. Dr. Hans-Henning Eckstein**, president VI and head of the vascular surgical department Klinikum rechts der Isar in Munich.

„In the past, vascular fellows learned surgical techniques by assisting operations to experienced surgeons and then by gradually applying these learned techniques. Today the European working directive and the changed working environment demands new training modalities. We are convinced that the introduction of real-life simulators for open surgery and endovascular techniques improves and shortens training of vascular fellows. Thus the learning curve is steeper and extracted from patient care into models, additionally team-training can be performed. We need a paradigm shift as the methods of the past are not fit for the future. Finally, demographic changes will challenge vascular medicine very soon,“ adds **Univ.-Prof. Jürg Schmidli**, board of trustees VI and head of the vascular surgical department, University hospital, Bern.

Due to a higher demand of vascular surgeons and of shorter education significant changes have already been undertaken – for instance in Germany a six-year training programme for vascular surgeons was introduced 2005. The USA increased the numbers of vascular trainees from 80 to 120. At the same time it reduced the vascular training programme to five years.

International breakthrough

In the course of intensified international activities and growing demand for courses and simulation models, VI has extended its course programmes.

Further important events were added to the established VI training courses in Pontresina: the European Vascular Course in Maastricht in March 2011, a Vascular basic course for the German Armed Forces, courses at the Charing Cross Meeting in London in April 2011 and

courses for the North American Society of Vascular Surgery, SVS, in Chicago in June 2011, as well as for the Methodist Institute for Technology Innovation and Education (MITIE) in Houston, Texas, in August 2011.

The big international breakthrough took place in June 2011 in Chicago. VI was invited to the SVS congress (Society of Vascular Surgery), USA. Under the supervision of **Prof. Dr. Hans-Henning Eckstein** and **Prof. Dr. Afshin Assadian**, board of trustees VI and head of the surgical department of the Wilhelminenspital Vienna, VI offered several training courses focusing on aortic repair.

„The aim of these courses was to demonstrate students how quickly they can improve their technical skills when being taught in structured simulations sessions by experienced vascular surgeons.“ so Assadian.

In August 2011 another VI course was offered in cooperation with the Institute for Technology Innovation and Education, (MITIE) in Houston, Texas – MITIE is known as internationally best equipped surgical training center. Practical hands-on training on different VI models were offered.

„Among the 32 vascular fellows (from Yale, Stanford, Harvard etc.) who attended the course, the aortic module was highest rated. Currently, in the USA more than 60 % of AAA are treated endovascularly. Thus the exposure to open surgery and the needed numbers are decreasing dramatically. Therefore open AAA repair in simulation is increasingly important to achieve optimal training results,“ says Eckstein.

Beginn of industrial production of simulation devices

In 2009 another important step was undertaken when VI started to cooperate with the company Synbone to produce the models industrially due to the increasing demand. There are five different models available: carotid-, limb-, aortic- models as well as the so called Interventions Training Unit (ITU).

Cooperation with societies and industries

As new training methods (one-to-one teaching) are needed, the implementation of simulation in surgery will enhance the quality of vascular training. VI already cooperates with societies such as the Austrian Society for Vascular Surgery (ÖGG), the Swiss Society for Vascular Surgery (SGG), the European Society for Vascular Surgery (ESVS), the Division of Vascular Surgery of UEMS and the Society of Vascular Surgery (SVS), USA.

This year 2012 VI offers courses at the EVC Maastricht, the Charing Cross in London, the UCLA in Los Angeles and at the SVS in Washington DC.

VI also seeks cooperation with the industry. „It enables optimal application of the products used in daily clinical practice,“ says Eckstein.

For more details go to www.vascular-international.org

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