Coimbra’s Residency Training gains EBU certification
A commitment to high quality standards

On July 25, 1969 when Neill Armstrong became the first man to set foot on the moon, history was also being written in Portugal. On the same day, in Coimbra, a team lead by Luishe Forcada performed the first renal transplant in the country despite the obstacles and the novelty of transplantation medicine.

Forty years later, the Department of Urology, where this milestone happened, is now considered as one of Europe’s leading renal transplantation centres.

Portugal is also above the European average in terms of the number of transplants, with 45,7 renal transplants/million inhabitant per year.

The University Hospital of Coimbra, an academic hospital located in Portugal’s central region, serves a population of over 500,000, and has been building a respectable reputation in healthcare, education and research.

The Department of Urology and Renal Transplantation employs 12 urologists and 10 residents in urology. Its two in-patient wards have a 53-bed capacity, one for patients afflicted with various urological diseases, while the other one is dedicated to renal transplantation. Besides renal transplantation, the department is also a centre of expertise in other urological specialties such as medical and surgical oncology, laparoscopic Urological care in all other areas, such as endourology, andrology, neurology and reconstructive urology, is also provided and maintained with high international standards.

Every year, approximately 2,000 patients are admitted to the department facilities, with an estimated 24,000 medical appointments made. The department has two well-equipped surgical theatres, enabling the surgical treatment of over 1,200 patients every year. Out-patient surgery is also performed every week. Many of the facilities required for modern urological care are available such as urodynamics, flexible cystoscopy, ESWL, 3-Tesla MRI, CT, PET-CT scan.

At the department, staff and residents are committed to maintain a friendly and cooperative atmosphere, enhancing intellectual stimulation in both medical and surgical training. Residents are encouraged to:

• take active participation in national and international meetings,
• publish articles
• annually take part in the EBU In-Service Assessment.

The Portuguese residency training programme in Urology

• takes six years; including one year in General Surgery and at least one year in Urology and two months in Paediatric Surgery and Orthopaedics.
• takes five years; this includes four months in Surgery, two months in Internal medicine, one month in Gynaecology, two months in Intensive care and at least six-specialties in Paediatric urology.
• During the first year of the training period residents focus on general urology including ward and inpatient care and outpatient department.
• After one year residents start to rotate in the following sub-specialities: Oncology, Reconstructive urology, Female/functional and Neuro-urology, Paediatric urology, Endoscopy and laparoscopy, and Andrology.
• During particular sub-specialization courses, residents assist and perform surgery in the specific field, study and discuss relevant literature and clinical papers. Every sub-specialization is guided by one or two staff members, specialized in the relevant topic.

A personal tutor assigned to each resident-in-training is responsible for fulfilling all points in the teaching programme. Special attention is paid on the training of skills in urological interventions and surgery. Residents maintain an individual logbook with a given number of performed and assisted operations and invasive diagnostic procedures.

Residents participate in regular teaching rounds under the guidance of staff members, regular clinical conferences, pathologies, radiology, urology and other multidisciplinary conferences. The level of knowledge and achieved skills are evaluated every six months by the personal tutor and yearly by the head of the department. An important tool is the EBU In-Service Assessment.

Trainees participate in all available educational courses and seminars. Presentation skills are trained during monthly scientific meetings. Each resident is requested to prepare and present at least one lecture, every year, on a given topic. From the third residency year, residents start to present results of their research activities during the annual meeting of the national society and, if possible, in international meetings.

From their second year, residents are included in research groups and are obliged to write at least two articles in a peer-reviewed journal during their training. Due to the success of the training system, the efficient facilities and the range of academic activities in clinical work, basic research and publications, the urology department applied for EBU certification. The EBU certification, granted for a period of five years in October 2012, has led to the critical appraisal of our training programme.

The staff of the Urology and Renal Transplant Department in Coimbra years in October 2012. This is a mark of excellence and a commitment to maintain high residency training standards. Furthermore, the application itself presents a valuable opportunity to gain external feedback, which is always helpful when continuous improvement is required.

We are confident that other urology departments in Portugal will also apply for EBU certification in the near future, as we are strongly committed to maintain quality standards in Portuguese urological training and practice.

Recently, a reform in the healthcare system led to the merger of our hospital with another tertiary care centre, creating the largest urology department in the country. With this recent development we expect further improvements in patient care, staff training, and research.