

A Pioneer's Path

Humanity at work via Dr. Radmilo Roncevic's breakthrough in surgery of the orbit

By: R.N. Sugitha Nadarajah



Dr. Radmilo Roncevic (Photo credit: South European Union for Combating Cancer (SEUCC) official website)

In the latest Researcher in Spotlight interview with JSD media, prominent Serbian plastic and craniofacial surgeon Professor Dr. Radmilo Roncevic asserts, “The key challenges in my commitment are great surgical procedures in the field of craniofacial surgery (tumors, deformities and injuries) and surgery of the orbit.”

“Surgery of the orbit, from the point of surgery, is ‘no man’s land’. However, I wanted to succeed in this area of surgery,” adds Dr. Roncevic, who has extensive international experience in the field of plastic, reconstructive and maxillo-facial surgery, referring to how no surgical discipline has ever fully addressed that particular area.

According to Belgrade’s Special Ophthalmic Hospital, surgery of the orbit belongs to no particular surgical specialty, and thus such interventions are performed rarely and with insufficient expertise. “As this surgical discipline is not yet mastered or not sufficiently mastered, a number of people may remain disabled for life, with seriously impaired vision or loss of vision,” it says.

Special Ophthalmic Hospital prides itself in being the venue for many eye surgeries done using the methods of world famous Russian Fyodorov School by distinguished Russian surgeons and is one of the institutions where Dr. Roncevic conducts complete orbital surgery interventions as a consultant.



Dr. Radmilo Roncevic at work (Photo credit: Dr. Roncevic)

The renowned plastic surgeon Dr. Roncevic's successful career in the medical field began when he graduated with honors from the Medical School and the School of Dental Medicine in Belgrade, Serbia, and subspecialized in craniofacial surgery and the surgery of the orbit as a doctor, and also in oral surgery as a dentist.

"After I graduated in Medicine and Dentistry, it was normal to deal with maxillofacial and craniofacial surgery. That's why I chose to specialize in plastic and maxillofacial surgery," he explains.

Dr. Roncevic gained his Doctorate of Medical Sciences at the Military Medical Academy (MMA) in Belgrade. The MMA was established in 1844 and is the largest military hospital in South-Eastern Europe and one of the largest in the world. Here, Dr. Roncevic was involved in numerous activities involving civilian and military healthcare.

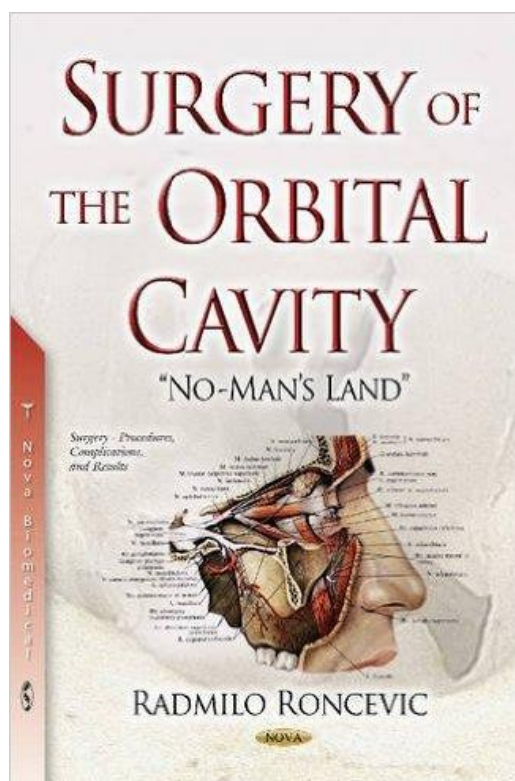
Throughout his career, the surgeon made a significant mark in his field of work when he became the pioneer of surgical treatment of thyroid ophthalmopathy (protruding eyes). For his work, Dr. Roncevic received numerous acknowledgements from the American Society

of Plastic Surgeons and many other prestigious medical organizations from all over the world.

The surgeon is a member of the International Confederation of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery (IPRAS), International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS) and European Association for Cranio Maxillo-Facial Surgery (EACMFS) and has been cited more than 250 times in international medical journals and books.

Dr. Roncevic has authored more than 100 scientific papers, of which 34 were published in leading peer-reviewed journals of plastic surgery and he has presented more than 115 papers, published as abstracts, at international congresses. Furthermore, he has written chapters in two books printed in US and is the sole author of the book titled 'Surgery of the Orbital Cavity: No Man's Land'.

As his fame as a skilled plastic surgeon grew, Dr. Roncevic was invited to give lectures at various places worldwide. So far, he has delivered 49 lectures at major world centres, namely at USA's Mayo Clinic and various university centres in New York, Cairo, Sofia, London,



A book written by Dr. Roncevic which includes a comprehensive systematic description of the complete surgery of the orbit (Photo credit: Nova Science Publishers)

Glasgow, Tokyo, Rome, San Francisco, Miami, St. Petersburg, and Moscow; and he has given seven lectures as a visiting professor at Pennsylvania State University, USA, and has twice lectured as a visiting professor at the University of Hanover, Germany.

As a testament to his expertise, at the International Advances in Aesthetic Surgery Symposium (2000) held in Las Vegas and organized by the American Association of Aesthetic Surgery, Dr. Roncevic was one of the rare experts from outside of the United States who was invited as a guest speaker at the conference. In 2002, during a seminar in Baltimore about the surgery of the orbit, one of its themes was dedicated to the work of Dr. Roncevic in the field of orbital surgery.

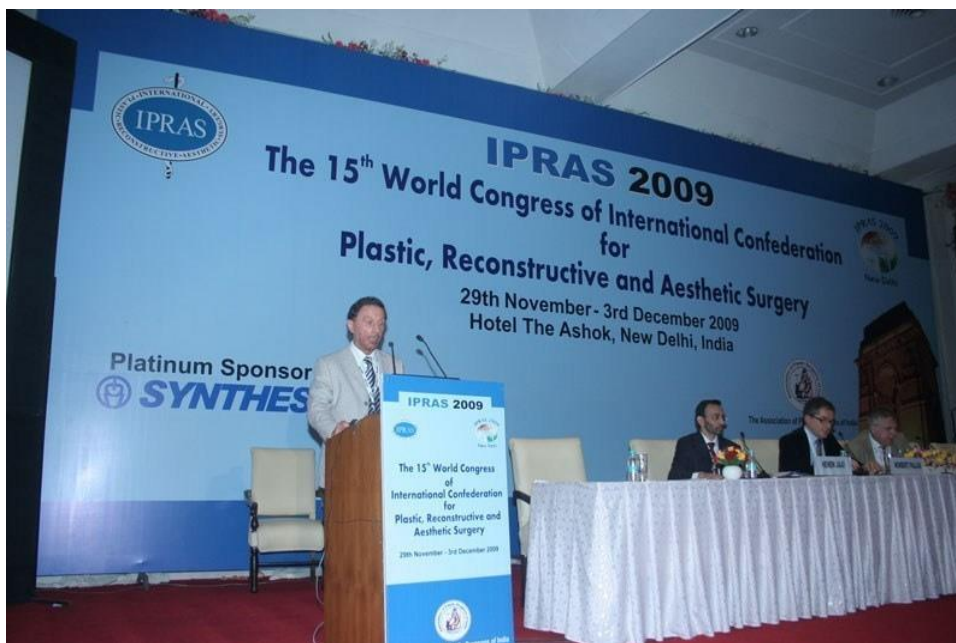
Despite his successes, Dr. Roncevic remains humble and true to his profession by putting his patients' need above all else and had even performed surgeries purely out of the kindness of his heart as described in an anecdote shared by the Diocese of Zahumlje-Herzegovina.

According to the Diocese, Dr. Roncevic was attending the consecration ceremony of the newly restored Petropavlov monastery in Trebinje, Herzegovina, and he had noticed a “young man with a large mole (tumor) over the whole half of the face.” The young

man's tumor, due to its potential surgery risk, required the skills of a surgeon with extensive experience and expertise, and thus was “rejected by many good plastic surgeons worldwide,” the Diocese recounted the story in its website.

Dr. Roncevic then reportedly said, “I think I can help this young man please let me know.” In return, the surgeon had only asked for a hospital room and the assistance of doctors and medical staff, all of which were readily provided by the nearby Trebinje Hospital. Soon after, Dr. Roncevic again undertook the 440 km trip from Belgrade to Trebinje to conduct the first stage of the surgery which involved removal of the tumor and healthy tissue transplantation.

Dr. Roncevic returned again sometime later and completed the second stage of the surgery as well as two other surgeries, all of which were “extremely complex and difficult operation,” and he did them without any monetary compensation. “Without many words, he took some time out of all his obligations and spent two days in Herzegovina to fulfil his promise. Dr. Radmilo Roncevic is a world-renowned plastic surgeon, who for decades used his extraordinary gift of the benefits in the best possible way by helping people....He shows humanity at



Dr. Roncevic presenting his speech at the 15th World Congress of International Confederation for Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery (Photo credit: Dr. Roncevic)



Dr. Roncevic with his colleagues (Photo credit: Dr. Roncevic)

work and his talent, without any personal gain, to help a man in trouble,” praised the Diocese of the surgeon’s selfless acts.

Based on his experiences and challenges faced throughout his successful career, Dr. Roncevic has this to say to future researchers that are aiming to succeed in the field of craniofacial surgery: “In order to successfully overcome the challenges in craniofacial surgery, it is necessary to have an excellent knowledge of the anatomy of this [craniofacial] region, in addition to having excellent knowledge of the pathology of the region, as well as of general medicine, surgery and dentistry.

“Craniofacial surgery is a very difficult and risky surgery. Along with the knowledge, it is necessary to have hard work, perseverance, responsibility, responsible courage and perception, and the extraordinary abilities of

observations of all the details before surgery, during surgery and after surgery.

“Knowledge, perception, and the extraordinary abilities of observation, are important for the prevention of errors in the overall long-term expertise work,” he told the JSD media team. ■

Dr. Radmillo Roncevic has worked as a senior surgeon and professor at leading hospitals in former Yugoslavia (Military Medical Academy, Belgrade; Military Hospital, Zagreb; Clinical Center of Serbia, Belgrade). He now owns a private practice in the plastic, aesthetic, craniofacial surgery and surgery of the orbit. His Editorial, “Is Surgical Dermatology a fiction due to the existence of Plastic and Aesthetic Surgery and Cosmetology, and who is to perform these operations?” is published in this issue of JSD (pg 5–6).