PROF. AZMİ HAMZAOĞLU, M.D.

PROF. DR. AZMİ HAMZAOĞLU

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SUMMARY:

Prof. Dr. Azmi Hamzaoğlu was born in 1956 in Sinop. He became an Orthopaedics and Trauma professor in 1996 and founded the ecole of Florence Nightingale Hospital. Prof. Dr. Hamzaoğlu is a true pioneer of Turkish spinal surgery, having contributed immensely to his field, especially by cultivating and mentoring many of today's Turkish spinal surgeons.

Key words: Prof. Azmi Hamzaoğlu, Florence Nightingale Hospital, scoliosis, traction x-rays

Level of Evidence: Biography, Level V

ÖZET:

Prof. Dr. Azmi Hamzaoğlu, 1956 yılında Sinop'ta doğdu. 1996 yılında Ortopedi ve Travmatoloji uzmanı oldu ve Florans Nightingale ekolünü kurdu. Bu gün Türkiye'de bir çok spinal cerrahının yetişmesine büyük katkıları olan Prof. Dr. Azmioğlu, omurga cerrahisinin her alanında gelişmeyi sağlamış ve bir çok yeniliği ülkemiz omurga cerrahisine kazandırmış, asla yeri doldurulamaz, gerçek bir omurga cerrahisi öncüsüdür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Azmi Hamzaoğlu, Florans Nightingale Hastanesi, skolyoz, traksiyon grafileri.

Kanıt Düzeyi: Biyografi, Düzey V

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INTRODUCTION:

Prof. Dr. Azmi Hamzaoğlu was born in 1956 in Sinop. He became an Orthopaedics and Trauma professor in 1996 and founded the ecole of Florence Nightingale Hospital. Prof. Dr. Hamzaoğlu is a true pioneer of Turkish spinal surgery, having contributed immensely to his field, especially by cultivating and mentoring many of today's Turkish spinal surgeons[26].

LIFE STORY:

Prof. Dr. Azmi Hamzaoğlu was born into a wealthy family as one of eight children in the Ayancık province of Sinop. His father, Cemil, was a businessman with a high school education who opened several gas stations around Sinop. Mr. Cemil had four children each from his first and second marriage. Aside from the gas stations he owned and operated, he also owned several number mills (Figure-1)[31].

Figure-1. Prof. Azmi Hamzaoğlu, M.D.

Prof. Dr. Hamzaoğlu completed his elementary and middle school education in Ayancık. He graduated middle school at the top of his class. Although he spent every summer and every day after school at his father's gas stations as a pump attendant, he still managed to be a successful student in every class (Figure-2)[31].

A recognition for finishing middle school first in his class, he was admitted into Istanbul Kabatas Boys High School in 1970. He still says his high school years at this boarding school on the banks of the Bosporus were the best years of his life[31] (Figure-3).

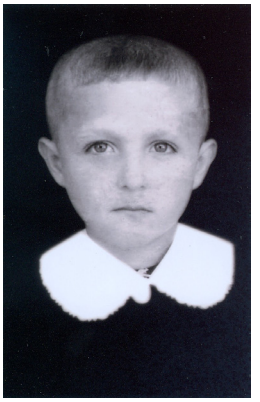

Figure-2. Prof. Hamzaoğlu, in primary school.

Figure-3. Prof. Azmi Hamzaoğlu, in Kabataş Boy High School.

Prof. Dr. Azmi Hamzaoğlu made his family proud once again when he completed Istanbul Kabatas Boys High School as valedictorian of his class. He also learned a decent amount of French during his time in high school. He decided he wanted to be an electrical/electronic engineer. However, because of his family's (and especially his father's) insistence for him to become a medical doctor, he started Istanbul University, Çapa Medical School. While he was a university student, he stayed at a house his father had rented for him and his three friends from high school. He spent the majority of his time either studying or working at the orthopaedics and trauma clinic[26,31].

During his school years, he discovered his passion for football, and although he got the chance to play on Besiktaş's youth team, because he didn't have the support of his father, he continued to play football only for fun throughout his years in high school and university[31].

In 1979, shortly after becoming a medical doctor, he started his residency at Istanbul University's Çapa Medical School, in the Orthopaedics and Trauma Department[31].

He had a friend who suffered from chronic tibial osteomyelitis and who underwent numerous unsuccessful surgeries. Dr. Hamzaoğlu's determination to find a solution for his friend's condition was one of the reasons he chose to complete his residency in orthopaedics and traumatology after he graduated from medical school. When Dr. Hamzaoğlu started his residency, he had the privilege of being trained under some of the most indispensible professors of the time, including Prof. Dr. Fahri Seyhan (who was the Department Chief at the time), Prof. Dr. Alp Göksan, Prof. Dr. Bahattin Oğuz Temuçin, Prof. Dr. Orhan Baykur, Prof. Dr. Yilmaz Akalın, and Prof. Dr. Mişel Kokino. Unfortunately, most of these valuable professors are now currently deceased. At the beginning of his residency, Prof. Dr. Ünsal Domaniç was the Chief of Residents, while Prof. Dr. Remzi Tözün and Prof. Dr. Ünal Kuzgun were senior residents, and Prof. Dr. Harzem

Özger, Prof. Dr. Mehmet Çakmak and Prof. Dr. Ömer Taşer were same-year residents as Hamzaoğlu. Dr. Hamzaoğlu also had the opportunity to work with Dr. Fethiye Ayhan, who was one of the first female orthopaedic surgeons in Turkey[31].

In his freshman year of residency, Dr.Hamzaoğlu was tasked with making the Risser cast with Prof. Dr. Bahattin Oğuz Temuçin, who was initially trained by Dr. Stagnara in Germany and France. This task of making the Risser casts became the foundation of Dr.Hamzaoğlu's desire to start a career in spinal surgery. It was because he spent nearly three years of his residency working with Dr. Temuçin that he became so well trained in spinal surgery[31].

In 1981, he married Dr. Nihal Hamzaoğlu, who was a year behind Dr. Azmi Hamzaoğlu, completing her residency in physical therapy and rehabilitation. His daughter, İpek, was born in 1989 and in 1990, his son, Cemil, who was named after Dr. Hamzaoğlu's father, was born(Figure-4)[31].

Figure-4. Prof. Nihal Hamzaoğlu, wife of Prof. Hamzaoğlu.

Currently, his daughter, İpek, is completing her Master's in Fine Arts in the United States. His son, Cemil, received his degree in Business and is currently working the in energy sector[31].

In 1983, after completing his residency, Dr. Hamzaoğlu spent two tears at İstinye State Hospital as his mandatory service obligation. After completing his mandatory military service, Dr. Hamzaoğlu returned to the university clinic. In 1989, he became an associate professor and in 1996, he received the title, Professor[31].

In 1989, Dr. Hamzaoğlu went to the United States and worked as a fellow at the Twin Cities Spine Center in Minnesota. During his spinal surgery training here, he received indispensible training and experience from Prof. Dr. Robert Winter, Prof. Dr. John Lonstein, and Prof. Dr. Francis Denis, three of the biggest experts in the world in the fields of scoliosis, spine trauma, and congenital deformities[31].

In 1991, Dr. Hamzaoğlu studied spine tumors for a month at Hakaido University in Japan (Figure-5)[31].

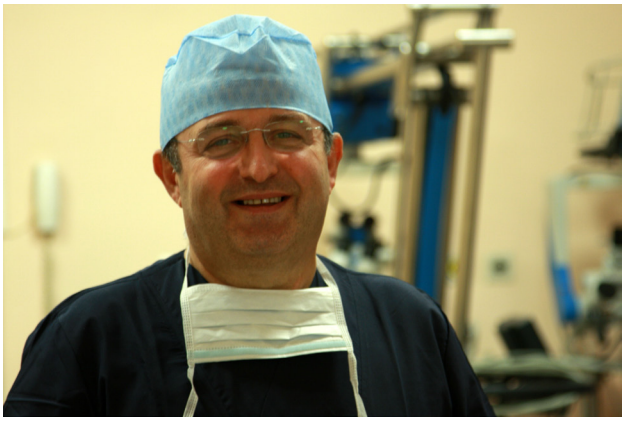

Figure-5. Prof. Hamzaoğlu, in the operating room.

In 1993, he became an SRS member and in 2008, he served on the International Relations Commission Board of Members[31].

After years of dedicated service, Dr. Hamzaoğlu separated from Istanbul University Çapa Medical School in 2003[31].

Dr. Hamzaoğlu, who had started working part-time at Florence Nightingale Hospital in 1996, started working full-time in 2003 after separating from Istanbul University. Here, he established a clinic that focused solely on spine surgeries. He named this clinic Istanbul Spine Center, which was the first center of its kind in all of Turkey[31].

Dr. Hamzaoğlu achieved fame with his successful surgery of actress Fatma Girik, who had an L-1 burst fracture after falling off of a horse. Sometime later, when Dr. Hamzaoğlu operated on another actor, Tamer Yiğit, for a cervical fracture, he gained even more popularity when he appeared in all of the national newspapers (Figure-6)[31].

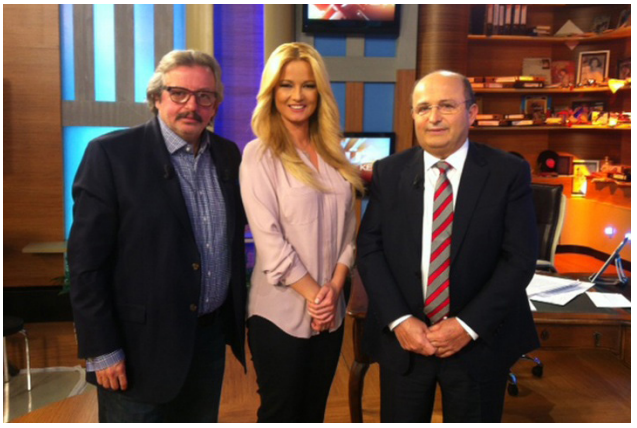

Figure-6. Prof. Hamzaoğlu, in the television programme.

Other famous and noteworthy people Dr. Hamzaoğlu has operated on include Korkut Eken (who became quadriplegic after a cervical fracture), journalist Hıncal Uluç (who had a cervical disc hernia), Galatasaray Sports Club president Faruk Süren, Galatasaray football team coach Müfit Erkasap, businessman Ferit Şahenk, father-in-law of businessman Murat Ülker, former Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz's wife, Berna Yılmaz, uncle of Fenerbahçe Sports Club President Aziz Yıldırım, and finally, current Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's mother (due to an osteoporotic vertebral fracture) (Figure-7)[31].

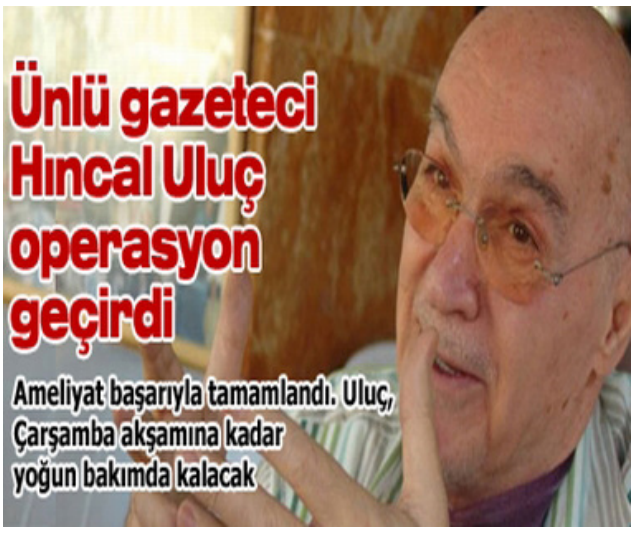

Figure-7. The news about the journalist Hıncal Uluç in a newspaper.

Because of his incredibly busy 20-year non-stop schedule, Dr. Hamzaoğlu has made a well-deserved name for himself in the history of Turkish spinal surgery. There is virtually no individual who undergoes scoliosis surgery without first getting Dr. Hamzaoğlu's medical opinion[31].

Prof. Dr. Azmi Hamzaoğlu once shared an anecdote at a NASS Congress in New York. After coming home between 11 p.m. and midnight every day for years, one day when he came home early to prepare to leave for another congress, his children greeted him at the door in tears. They were crying because they thought their father was home early because he was sick. Despite this very busy schedule, Dr. Hamzaoğlu still manages to squeeze in an hour of tennis twice a week, and has Sunday brunch and a fish dinner once a week with his family (Figure-8)[31].

Figure-8. Prof. Hamzaoğlu, with his tennis friends.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPINAL SURGERY:

Prof. Dr. Azmi Hamzaoğlu has contributed greatly not only to orthopaedic surgeons, but also to neurosurgeons in the field of spinal surgery. Nearly all of Dr. Hamzaoğlu's internationally published articles are about spine surgery[1-30, 32-54]. He not only trained his many residents while at Istanbul University, but he also trained and mentored countless orthopaedic surgeons via his courses, meetings and fellowships held at the Istanbul Spine Center he founded at Florence Nightingale Hospital (Figure-9).

He is the first surgeon in Turkey to apply the combined anterior-posterior spine surgery technique[31]. He is also the first surgeon to perform a combined anterior-posterior convex hemiepiphysiodesis in congenital scoliosis in Turkey[15]. In 1990, he began to use the Cotrel Dubousset system, operated on many scoliosis cases, and made a name for himself in the field of scoliosis. From then on, almost every parent who had a child suffering from scoliosis wished to apply to Dr. Hamzaoğlu for his medical opinion[26,31].

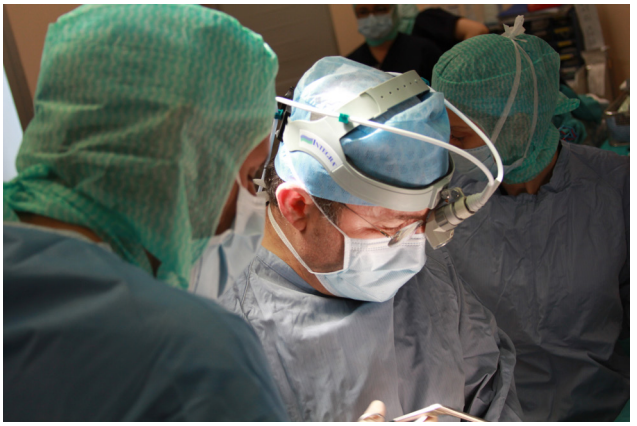

Figure-9 Prof. Hamzaoğlu, in the operation room in İstanbul Florance Nightingale Hospital.

He was the first surgeon in Turkey to use the anterior Zielke system in 1991 and the anterior Kaneda system in 1992. Both systems gained popularity in Turkey after Hamzaoğlu's use of them[26,31]. Prof. Hamzaoğlu was the first to perform a total hemivertebrectomy using the posterior approach and the first to perform the posterior vertebral colon resection (PVCR) osteotomies technique in Turkey. His very successful use of the PVCR osteotomy technique on his large series of patients are published in many of the top spine journals (Figure-10)[32,43].

What makes Prof. Dr. Azmi Hamzaoğlu most well-known internationally is his practice of taking traction x-rays of his patients while they are under general anesthesia so he can revise his final surgical planning as necessary. This way, patients are operated on while under traction, and their very rigid curves are fully corrected without the need for additional anterior procedures or osteotomies[23,25].

Prof. Dr. Hamzaoğlu's other contribution to the world of spinal surgery, almost as important as his contribution to Turkish Spinal Surgery, is the algorithm he devised for the treatment of congenital thoracic lordoscoliosis [2,43].

Prof. Dr. Hamzaoğlu might also be the first orthopaedic surgeon to perform a cervical discectomy in Turkey. (We would also like to take this opportunity to wish a speedy recovery of his recent diagnosis of cerebrovascular disease to our dear Prof. Dr. Ridvan Ege, who was the first orthopaedic surgeon in Turkey to perform a lumbar discectomy and the first to publish an 11-patient series.) However, we are certain that Prof. Dr. Hamzaoğlu was the first to perform an endoscopic lumbar discectomy using the Matrix system[35].

Prof. Dr. Hamzaoğlu was the first to perform an anterior-posterior total vertebroctomy in one session and is still the person who performs this procedure most often[14,37,40].

Figure-10. Prof. Dr. Hamzaoğlu became the president of the Turkish Spine Society (TOD) in 2003. At that time, the Turkish Spine Society was one of the few branch associations that carried the word "Turkish" in the title.

Prof. Dr. Hamzaoğlu organized the GICD Congress in 1999 and the International Bosporus Spine Congress in 2000, 2001, and 2003. Additionally, he attended nearly 50 international congresses in which he was personally invited to speak or to give a presentation[26,31].

Prof. Dr. Hamzaoğlu became the president of the Turkish Spine Society (TOD) in 2003. At that time, the Turkish Spine Society was one of the few branch associations that carried the word "Turkish" in the title. Allowing neurosurgeons to become members of the association first began under his term as president. To make way for this, Prof. Dr. Hamzaoğlu organized a hands-on spine course strictly for neurosurgeons. Additionally, he organized the International Turkish Spine Surgery Congress in 1992. This congress was talked about on an international level and was attended by many foreign speakers who were experts in their respective fields[26].

In 2004, when Prof. Hamzaoğlu was Turkish Spine Society president, he worked to move the SRS annual congress to Istanbul. However, after the British Consulate and HSBC bombings, the congress was moved at the last minute to Brazil. Two years later, Prof. Dr. Hamzaoğlu became the regional SRS meeting president and held the course in Istanbul.

He served on the SRS International Relations Committee in 2005-2006.

Prof. Dr. Hamzaoğlu personally trained countless orthopaedic surgeons by allowing them to work by his side. He also provided many of those training under him to attend training headed by other valuable experts, especially such as Dr. Transfeld and Dr. Asher[26,31].

Prof. Dr. Hamzaoğlu was the first doctor in Turkey who was visited under the SRS Traveling Fellowship. Dr. Alex Vaccaro and Dr. Timothy Kuklo, who are considered to be two of today's best spinal surgeons, were just two of the many participants of this fellowship program[31].

Currently, Istanbul Spine Center hosts a one-year fellowship program, which is mostly attended by Middle Eastern, Asian and African orthopaedic surgeons and neurosurgeons and Turkish surgeons working in eastern and southeastern Anatolian universities. The program is in its fourth year, and to this day, 10 foreign fellows and many Turkish spinal surgeons have completed their fellowship.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, Prof. Dr. Azmi Hamzaoğlu's flawless character, his caring personality, his knowledge and experience, and his countless publications have made him an indispensible pioneer of modern spinal surgery, not just in Turkey, but worldwide. I personally (T.B.) owe him greatly and will always think of him with gratitude and admiration. In all honesty, a spinal surgeon who hasn't benefitted from the contributions of Prof. Dr. Hamzaoğlu is virtually nonexistent. With his incredible passion for his job and his unbelievable work ethic, he has earned every bit of all he has achieved.

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