



## A SIGNIFICANT FIGURE IN THE ANKARA MEDICAL FACULTY PART 1: PROF. İLKER ÇETİN M.D.

*ANKARA TIP FAKÜLTESİNDE ÜÇ DEV ÇINAR -1:  
PROF. DR. İLKER ÇETİN*

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### SUMMARY

The Department of Orthopedics and Traumatology of Ankara University's School of Medicine has trained and developed many academicians in terms of almost every sub-branch of Orthopedics, from the very first day it was established. Masters such as Professor Güngör Sami Çakırgil and Professor Rıdvan Ege played important roles in the development of spinal surgery in a certain manner, which is also known as the 'Ankara Medical School Approach'. After these two masters, Professor İlker Çetin (now retired) took over the task, and he was also a pioneer and contributed to the development of Turkish Spinal Surgery countrywide. He then diverted his area of interest to arthroplasty and obtained a great reputation, not only in Turkey but also at international platforms. As he began his interest in arthroplasty, he handed over his former task to two professors (Professor Derya Dinçer and Professor Tarık Yazar). In this biography, the life stories of these significant figures and their endeavors for the development of Turkish Spinal Surgery are told in two chapters. The first chapter includes the studies of Professor İlker Çetin, and the second discusses Professor Derya Dinçer and Professor Tarık Yazar. On behalf of their students, we aim to also emphasize our appreciation and gratitude to them.

**Key Words:** İlker Çetin, scoliosis, thoracolumbar spinal fractures, spinal surgery

**Level of evidence:** Biography, Level V

### ÖZET

Ankara Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi Ortopedi ve Travmatoloji Anabilim Dalı, kuruluşundan bu güne kadar aşağı yukarı Ortopedi ve Travmatolojinin her dalında çok kıymetli ve konusunda üst düzey bilgi ve deneyime sahip birçok öğretim üyesi yetiştirmiş ve bünyesinde bulundurmıştır. Ankara Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi Ortopedi ve Travmatoloji Anabilim Dalı'nda Güngör Sami Çakırgil ve Rıdvan Ege gibi ustalar çalışmış ve omurga cerrahisinde Ankara Tıp ekolünün gelişmesinde önemli rol oynamışlardır. Onları takip eden ve hâlihazırda emekli olan Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin, bir dönem Anabilim Dalı Başkanlığı da yapmış ve hocalarından aldığı misyonu, daha geniş bir vizyonla sürdürmüş Türk Omurga Cerrahisi'ne önemli katkılar sağlamış, gerçek bir öncü olmuştur. Daha sonra omurga cerrahisini tamamen bırakıp artroplastiyeye yönelmiş ve bu konuda da yalnız Türkiye'de değil, uluslar arası haklı bir yere ulaşmıştır. Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin, omurga cerrahisiyle ilgili bayrağı iki çok güvendiği öğretim üyesine Prof. Dr. Derya Dinçer ve Prof. Dr. Tarık Yazar'a devretmiştir. Bu iki bölümden oluşan biyografi çalışmasında Türk Omurga Cerrahisine büyük katkıları olan bu dev çınarların hayat hikâyeleri ve Türk Omurga Cerrahisinin gelişmesi için çabaları anlatılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın ilk bölümü Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin'e ayrılmıştır. İkinci bölümde ise Prof. Dr. Derya Dinçer ve Prof. Dr. Tarık Yazar'a yer verilecektir. Bu vesile ile onlara yetiştirdikleri öğrenciler adına minnet ve şükran duygularımızın ifade edilmesi amaçlanmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İlker Çetin, skolyoz, torakolomber vertebra kırıkları, omurga cerrahisi

**Kanıt Düzeyi:** Biyografi, Düzey V

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## INTRODUCTION:

The Ankara University Medical School Orthopedics and Traumatology Department trained and developed a number of faculty members with a high level of knowledge and backgrounds in almost all branches of orthopedics and traumatology. Experts such as Gngr Sami akirgil and Rıdvan Ege worked in the Ankara University Medical School Orthopedics and Traumatology Department, and played a role in the development of the Ankara Medical School approach.

The Ankara Medical School approach was introduced in national and international scientific meetings and conferences, and also with a number of papers and articles, and proved that it was a pioneering approach in this area. Prof. Dr. İlker etin, who followed in the footsteps of the abovementioned experts in the development of this approach, made a great contribution and continued to develop a number of students until today, as a highly significant figure in Turkish Spinal Surgery (Figure-1).

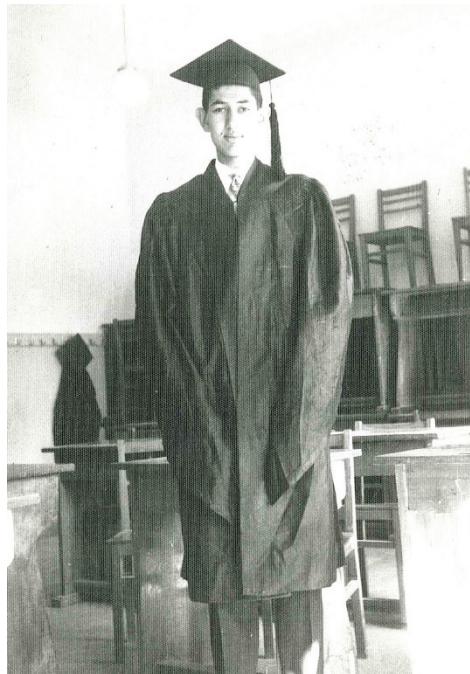


**Figure-1.** Prof. Dr. İlker etin

Prof. Dr. İlker etin is known as a doyen of Hip and Knee arthroplasty in Ankara, and patients with hip and knee arthritis visit him frequently. Although he is currently 71 years old, he performs a couple of prosthesis surgeries each day. In fact, his original area of interest was spinal surgery, after he specialized in orthopedics and traumatology, although he continues his modesty in this area.

## LIFE HISTORY OF PROF. DR. İLKER ETİN:

Prof. Dr. İlker ETİN was born in Iğdır on 2 January 1941. His mother was a housewife and his father was a judge. He is the oldest of his six siblings. The youngest sister out of the three brothers and three sisters followed in her older brother's footsteps and attended medical school, and became a gynaecology professor.



**Figure-2.a.** From the graduation ceremony at TED Ankara College

Due to his father Mr. Abbas Ali's job as a judge, he continued his elementary school education in various cities of Turkey, and he finally completed his education at Ankara Bahelievler elementary school. He completed his secondary and high school education at TED Ankara College (Figure-2.a,b).

He attended Ankara University Medical School in 1964. İlker etin, who was tall and athletic compared to his peers, spent many years playing sports and spent almost all of his time on the sports field (Figure-3.a,b).

He had a number of athletic successes in those years (Figure-4). However, as time passed, in his own words, he understood what he could not be. As he was interested in sports, he originally he said "I will specialize in physiotherapy and rehabilitation" when people asked him, although he abandoned this idea in his fifth year. He graduated from Ankara Medical School as a Medical Doctor in October 1970.



**Figure-2.b.** Receiving his high school diploma



**Figure-3. a.** In a basketball match in university, b. Championship cup won with Hababam basketball team

This delay in his graduation was due to political issues. Although he was wished to specialize in the eye department, as he was the favorite of his teacher in the eye department in his fifth and sixth years, he began his orthopedics and traumatology specialization.

When Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin applied for his specialization, Prof. Dr. Rıdvan Ege had just begun as chair. After a while, Dr. Zeki Korkusuz, who did his specialization in Germany, began working there and then became an Associate Professor. At

that time, Avni Duraman dealt with administrative issues and Rıdvan Ege dealt with assistant training (Figure-5).

When he applied to start his specialization, there was a problem with positions, since as soon as Prof. Dr. Rıdvan Ege began as chair he sent all his assistants to an anatomy rotation, and as the position of anatomy chair was open, he made İlker Çetin start an anatomy specialization. İlker Çetin, who had worked for six months in Ankara, giving lectures and dissecting cadavers, had a significant background in anatomy.



**Figure-4.** Receiving a silver medal after an 800 m race in the inter-universities athletics championship

At the end of the sixth month, when a position opened in the Orthopedics and Traumatology Department, he went to Kaplan, who was the head of the department at that time. However, Kaplan did not allow İlker Çetin to leave and told him to stay with him, and said he would send him to Germany and he would be an Associate Professor and Professor in a very short time. İlker Çetin told Prof. Dr. Rıdvan Ege about this situation, who said “Don’t worry, I will arrange it” and solved the problem, and so Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin started in the clinic, where he worked as a volunteer at the beginning. İlker Çetin, who worked for approximately six months in anatomy, understood how important this specialization was in order for him to become a good surgeon, as a deep anatomical knowledge is required, although he was initially bored and spent his time waiting for a position.

In an interview that I conducted with him, Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin described those years as follows: “Before beginning my specialization, trauma was performed but nobody knew the AO principles. With pediatric orthopedics, surgery of congenital hip dislocation cases, the addition of new people to the team, and the performance of disc surgery and anterior vertebral interventions, the reputation of Ankara University Medical School Orthopedics and Traumatology Department increased worldwide. All Pott cases and disc cases began to come to us. I assisted in hundreds of

anterior spinal interventions until the end of my specialization, and I performed hundreds of them by myself. I learned scoliosis and spinal fracture surgery with the start of Harrington rod application”.

While Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin was studying his specialization, two chief interns (specialists) from doyens of orthopedics worked in the Clinics. One of them was Surgeon Orhan Girgin and the other was Prof. Dr. Erdoğan Altinel. Then, Orhan Girgin went to Numune Hospital while Erdoğan Altinel stayed in the clinics. After a while, he also left, and Surgeon Selçuk Atilla, father of Prof. Dr. Bülent Atilla, was appointed to the chief internship.

Apart from Prof. Dr. Ertan Mergen, who we remember with mercy, and Surgeon Erol Süldür, Prof. Dr. Ethem Faruk Mumcu, Surgeon Ziya Aksan, Prof. Dr. Tugrul Berkel, Surgeon Behçet Sepici and Surgeon Mehmet Çulhaoğlu are seniors equal to Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin.

In his first year of specialization, in the middle of August, although İlker Çetin was a disciple assistant, Avni Duraman called İlker Çetin and asked him to make the guard, known as the barrel guard, for one week.

At the end of one week, Surgeon Mehmet Çulhaoğlu began work. Avni Duraman called İlker Çetin and asked him to make an accompaniment guard with Surgeon Mehmet Çulhaoğlu.

In the third week, he was set as the guard once more, being told “you have learned the job”. He made the guard again with a newly-begun assistant in the fourth week.

While he was returning home after one month of hospital work, he was surprised that the leaves were falling down. Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin described it as his most strange memory about his assistantship, saying that “I started the guard in summer and I finished it in the autumn”.

After finishing the barrel guards in the second year of his assistantship in 1972, he met and married Neşe Çetin, who was a student at Ankara University Faculty of Science in the Mathematics Department. Mrs. Çetin completed her astronomy masters and then worked as a teacher in mathematics, physics and astronomy in high school. After giving birth to their first child, she became a mother and housewife. İlker Çetin and Neşe Çetin had two sons, one of whom completed a METU Civil Engineering degree, and the other completed his degree at Bilkent University in the Economics Department. Currently, Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin has three grandchildren, two boys and one girl.



**Figure-5.** Ankara University Medical School Orthopedics and Traumatology Department. Prof. Dr. Avni Duraman in front in the middle, next to him Prof. Dr. Rıdvan Ege and Prof. Dr. Güngör Sami Çakırgil, Prof. Dr. Zeki Korkusuz, Prof. Dr. Ertan Mergen and their assistant friends.

While he entered his studies as a young doctor and an active sportsman, after completing his thesis about Perthes disease, he completed his specialization in orthopedics and traumatology in Ankara University with success, and became an Orthopedics and Traumatology Specialist. He became an Associate Professor in Orthopedics and Traumatology on 19 November 1982. He was appointed to Professorship on 27 October 1988. He became the Head of the Department where he had completed his specialization in 1992, and he worked as the head for nine years.

He left this clinic, where he worked as a faculty member until 2 January 2008, due to the age limit for retirement. After leaving this job, he began work as the Head of the Ufuk University Medical School Orthopedics and Traumatology Department by invitation. Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin, who also continued training assistants and students, left his job at Ufuk University in 2012. Currently, he accepts patients in his office and continues his active work and surgeries.

He presented a number of papers at a number of national and international conferences and symposia, and has published national and international articles.

Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin was always a friend of students and assistants. İlker Çetin, who liked to spend time with young people, developed and trained a number of faculty members. Thus, he deserves the title “the teacher of the teachers”. His endless working, reading, learning new things, and teaching enlightened his students. He was the elder brother, teacher, even father, and leader of all his assistants. Although he gave his students a hard time with difficult questions due to his deep anatomical knowledge, all of his students always attended his classes (Figure-6).

Besides his pedantry in surgery, his surgical speed was his most well-regarded characteristic. He had a good knowledge of anatomy, with his incredible memory playing an important role. As well as remembering the details of his athletics, names, and places, it is surprising that he also remembers anatomical, biochemical and pharmacological details.



**Figure-6.** At a national conference. İlker Çetin, who liked to spend time with young people, trained a number of faculty members.

İlker Çetin's biggest passion is athletics. He won first place in the 800 m at the World Inter-Armies Athletics Championship (Figure-7.a,b).

During his military service, he went to the United States of America for the World Inter-Armies Championship with the glider team (Figure-8).

Besides his active sports life, he became the Athletics Federation Head between 1991 and 1992, and made great contributions to the development and popularization of this sport. Another feature of İlker Çetin that interested me greatly is his fascination with art. He is very knowledgeable about paintings, knowing which artist painted which painting. Later, I learned that he spends most of his time during his scientific or touristic travels abroad in museums. He has visited almost all of the big museums in Europe (Figure-9.a,b).



**Figure-7.** a. Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin, winning a gold medal after achieving first place in the 800 m in the World Inter-Armies Athletics Championship, b. practicing on the sand during his reserve officer teacher job in Kurtkulağı village



**Figure-8.** During his military service, he also went to the United States of America for the World Inter-Armies Championship with the glider team.

I experienced the honour of working with İlker Çetin during special cases in Ufuk University Medical School, and after his retirement during his headship in our Department. Besides his contributions to assistants and students in those times, he also had time for faculty members and extended our knowledge.

İlker Çetin is always straightforward. He always says what he believes to be true, and no matter who he is talking to, he says things to their face without hesitation. I still hear him saying "Let's eat chicken" to the chief physician every day at noon. İlker Çetin, whom I have trusted for my mother's knee prosthesis, is a doctor who always obeys the deontology exactly, without compromise, and always helps all medical staff, not just doctors.

## HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPINAL SURGERY:

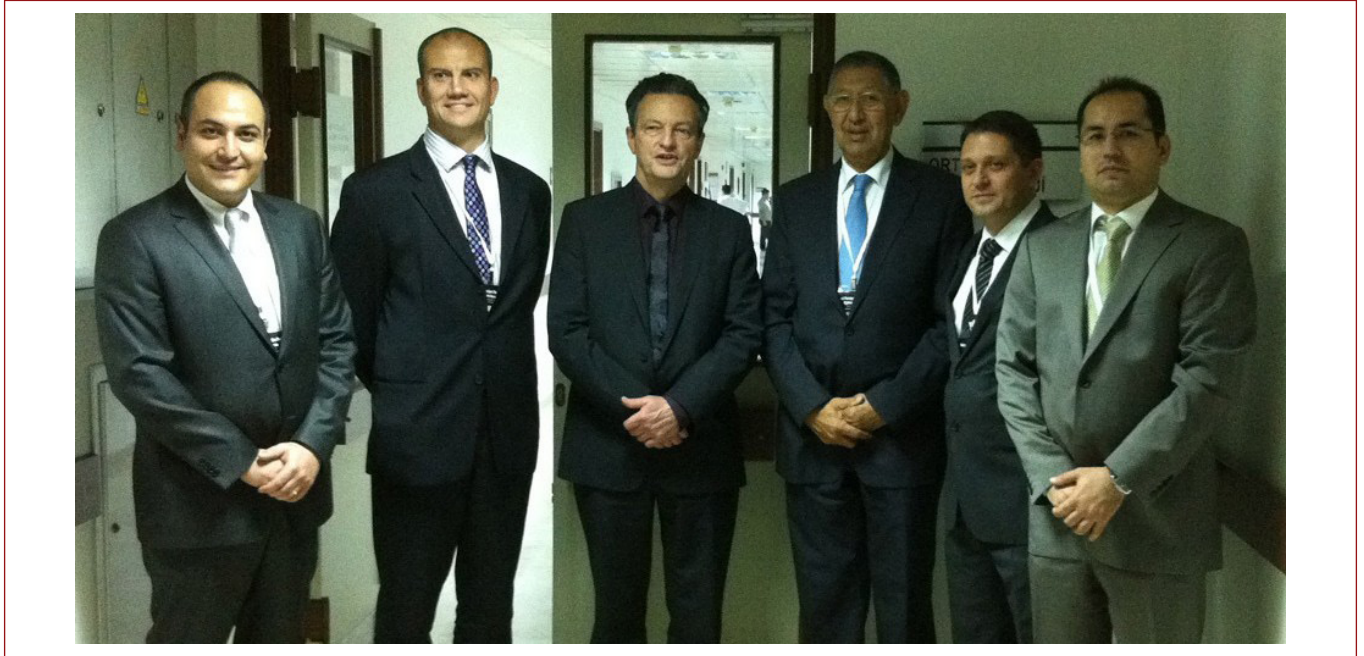
Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin learned the spinal surgical tradition that came from Ankara University Medical School in the 1960s, and he made great contributions to the Ankara Medical School approach. Beginning from his assistantship, he performed anterior interventions and posterior Harrington instrumentation applications in spinal fractures, idiopathic scoliosis and Pott disease.

He also followed innovations after the 1980s. He firstly went to Walter Dick, who was a student of Magerl working in Basel in Switzerland, and he learned the application of “Fixator Interns” in vertebral fractures. He was the first to apply this system in Turkey. His short-term training in Switzerland gave him superior knowledge in the formation mechanisms and classifications of vertebral fractures, and he described “thoracolumbar vertebral fractures and classification” for decades at conferences and scientific courses.

The symposia and courses which taught me the two-column and three-column theories were talks by İlker Çetin. Then, he went to Chopin, working in Berck-sur-mer in France, to learn the new Cotrel-Dubousset instrumentation for spinal deformation. He learned these new instrumentation and spinal correction strategies, including derotation, and when he returned he began to use them for all spinal deformations and made them widespread.

In the 1990s, he went to the United States of America and stayed with Marc Asher at Kansas University, and he learned the Isola method and became the first to apply the translation maneuver for scoliosis. Also, he developed the combination of the Isola and Galveston methods, which Marc Asher always praises, and began to use them in spondylolisthesis cases.

İlker Çetin worked on vertebral surgery actively until 1997 and applied the abovementioned techniques, he trained a number of students dealing with vertebral surgery, and treated thousands of vertebral patients. Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin is one of the humble workers but real leaders in Turkish Spinal Surgery.



**Figure-9.** Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin, at the “Unicondylar Knee Prosthesis Course” he organized, with Christopher Dodd.



**Figure-10. a.** Prof. Dr. İlker Çetin, while getting off a plane and **b.** on the plane for a visit abroad

In 1997, during his Headship of the Ankara University Medical School Orthopedics and Traumatology Department, as someone who understood the importance of specialization in this branch, he wanted the faculty members to work in only one branch. Prof. Dr. Tarık Yazar and Prof. Dr. Derya Dinçer chose the subject of vertebrae and, in his own words, the subject of arthroplasty was left to him. He stayed in Zurich in Switzerland

for three months in 1998 and learned Total Knee and Total Hip Prosthesis from significant people such as Spotorno and Müller, and began to apply these techniques. Then, by focusing on the subject of arthroplasty, and attending a number of courses in England and the United States of America, and learning the novelties, he brought them to our country (Figure-9, Figure-10.a,b).

Since then, as he promised in that meeting in 1997, he never performed spinal surgery again, focusing on arthroplasty, and obtained a reputation both in the Turkish Orthopedics and Traumatology family and in Turkey in this subject. Of course, we remember İlker Çetin's contributions to Turkish Spinal Surgery and commemorate him gratefully. We wish him health and happiness in his life.

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