

A Pillar of ESSKA: David H. Dejour News & Press: ESSKA

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ESSKA pays tribute to outstanding individuals who have contributed largely to the foundation, structure and growth of ESSKA, by identifying them as "Pillars of ESSKA". We thank each and every one of these individuals for their years of hard work and dedication to our society.

**Dr David H. Dejour, the newest "Pillar of ESSKA",
interviewed by ESSKA 2nd Vice-President Michael Hantes.**



Dr David H. Dejour
Lyon Ortho Clinic - Lyon, France



Michael Hantes

MH: Dear David, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the ESSKA TIMES as a Pillar of ESSKA. I believe that the environment in which you grew up, in a city widely recognized for knee surgery, and being the son of one of the pioneers in knee surgery, played a significant role in your involvement with orthopaedics and knee surgery. Is this true?

DD: Dear Michael, thank you to ESSKA, and thanks to you, the 2nd Vice-President, for interviewing me. Being a pillar of ESSKA makes me realize how quickly time passes... But this is a huge honour.

Of course, the role of my environment was decisive in my career as an orthopaedic surgeon. However, initially, I had no intention of becoming one. My only desire was to detach myself from my father. So, I was initially inclined towards plastic surgery, which beautifully combined my father's profession as a surgeon and my mother's profession as a professor of plastic arts.

However, I soon realized that plastic surgery was time-consuming and somewhat commercial, and it did not suit my profile. Towards the end of my residency, I understood that orthopaedic surgery was the right path for me.

The permanent enthusiasm in Lyon for orthopaedic surgery has been significant since the creation of the "Journées Lyonnaises de chirurgie du Genou" by Albert Trillat and Henri Dejour, which has taken place every two years since 1971. This congress has allowed Lyon's public and private teams to collaborate, share their results, and provide orthopaedic surgeons with a unique and effective vision. It is a team that analyses, observes, critiques its results, and publishes them in an honest and unbiased manner. Thanks to this continuous effort and the consistent organisation of these congresses, everyone has remained united and focused, despite the strong competition in Lyon. As a result, the overall image of orthopaedic surgery remains cohesive and strong across generations.

Every two years, we select a subject that allows us to delve deep and make significant progress. For instance, in 1987, we conducted extensive research on the patellofemoral joint, which provided the world with foundational knowledge for analysing this joint. Similarly, substantial contributions have been made in the field of the anterior cruciate ligament, as well as total and partial joint replacements. When we read the retrospective books published for each edition, we realize that even in the 80s, most aspects of the anterior cruciate ligament, such as the influence of the tibial slope, the posterolateral compartment, and the medial compartment, were extensively covered. Let us never forget our history!

It is in this environment that I lived that gave me the pleasure, the desire to do, to build, and to continue the work done by the former mentors of Lyon. Being the son of an orthopaedic pioneer was certainly not easy, but it was a driving force. Inevitably, I had to work twice as much as everyone else to establish my own identity and reputation.

Image: Patello Femoral Award from the Patella Femoral Foundation 2020: Henri Dejour 1930-1998 AND David H. Dejour



MH: How important was the experience of fellowship outside Lyon for your career?

DD: Traveling was fundamental, and it allowed me to acquire the renowned reputation I have today. My first three-week trip to Birmingham with Dr Jimmy Andrew at the beginning of my residency(1988) was quite traumatic as I knew nothing about orthopaedics and yet was treated as a surgeon because I came from Lyon. However, it marked the beginning of my international engagements, particularly at the ESSKA Congress in Budapest in 1996. Additionally, I spent a transformative year in the USA in 1993, where I visited several places over a period of two months. I went to Montreal for gait analysis, Salt Lake City where I discovered Tom Rosenberg and anterior cruciate ligament surgery, and the Rusch Presbyterian Hospital in Chicago where I met Jorge Gallante and TP Andriacchi, and finally Franck Noyes in Cincinnati and Freddy Fu in Pittsburgh.

My life changed during my time with Freddy Fu. I also established a strong bond with Stefano Zaffagnini, with whom I spent my entire international career, along with other fellows such as Romain Seil and Jacques Menetrey.

Freddy Fu was very open-minded and involved me in the morning staff meetings. He frequently asked me to present the work done in Lyon, and I had all my slides prepared in carousels, focusing on the Patella and the anterior cruciate ligament.

I had the great opportunity to make presentations at the AOSSM in 1994 and other American or international conferences, marking the start of my international career.

Participating in the Board of the Société Francophone d'Arthroscopie (SFA) and organizing the society's congress in Lyon in 2007 were also significant milestones in my professional life. They allowed me to connect with other French surgeons and step out of my comfort zone in Lyon, where tensions occasionally arose.

Image: 1993 Research Travelling Fellowship: Stefano Zaffagnini, Freddie Fu and David Dejour



MH: How did your relationship begin with ESSKA?

DD: It began a long time ago, starting with the Budapest congress. Since then, I have never missed an ESSKA meeting and have consistently published work. The strong links between ESSKA and the Lyon School of Knee Surgery, especially with Werner Muller, have been enduring. ESSKA provided a platform for European orthopaedic surgery and gave us an opportunity to establish ourselves and compete with the American giants.



In 2003, I was selected as a travelling fellow for the ESSKA-AOSSM programme, along with Christian Fink, Fredrik Almquist, and KP Benedeto. It was an outstanding summer we were “all stars”.

I had the opportunity to do it again in 2022, this time as a Godfather with Maristella Saccomanno, Katja Tecklenburg, and Guri Ekås my three “women in ESSKA” and I am so happy to see women coming in the “top management” of our society, it has been one of my best accomplishments in ESSKA.



These experiences truly demonstrate what ESSKA can offer to young surgeons—open minds and the chance to discover the world and continue the story.

Images: 2003 ESSKA AOSSM Travelling Fellowship at West Point: David Dejour, Fred Alquist, Christian Fink, KP Benedetto.

2022 ESSKA AOSSM Travelling Fellowship on the top of the Big Apple: Maristella Saccomanno, David Dejour, Guri Ranum Ekås and Katja Tecklenburg

MH: You joined the ESSKA board in 2014. Can you tell us the story behind this?

DD: I received an incredible gift in 2014. Niek van Dijk approached me and asked if I would like to be the 2nd Vice-President of ESSKA. How could I say no to such an opportunity? Usually, Presidents are chosen from within the board, but I was elected as the second Vice-President. It was a remarkable gift, especially considering that I had never engaged in political lobbying. This position continued to transform my life.

MH: How was your overall experience all these years as an ESSKA Board member?



DD: My experience has been quite smooth. When you join the board of such a big scientific society, you are initially a little shy. You observe, listen, and don't participate much, gradually finding your bearings. As the second and then first vice-president, I have always been interested and passionate about education. My niche was the Cadaver Lab that ESSKA used to teach young surgeons. We restructured the labs and created a new dynamic with the “All about... courses.”

Image: David H. Dejour teaching the fellows and visiting residents: measure value classify and then apply to have the right indication for surgery.

Over the years, we establish our authority and become more important on the board, but it takes time. I had the great chance to be in perfect continuity with

Romain Seil, Jacques Menetrey, and myself. Undoubtedly, our common language has favoured things, and our deep friendship has helped. However, the key to success is defining a multi-year strategic plan and implementing it. This governance has never been influenced politically or by commercial purposes.

Image: Four Happy ESSKA Presidents: ESSKA President 2016-2018 Romain Seil, ESSKA President 2000-2002 Pierre Chambat, ESSKA President 2018-2022 David Dejour, and ESSKA President 2020-2022 Jacques Menetrey



You can have new ideas, creative projects, and innovative targets, but you need people in the operational field. ESSKA has the strength of having a very professional and efficient staff, led by someone without whom ESSKA would not be ESSKA. I think of Zhanna Kovalchuk, the Managing (EXECUTIVE??) Director, who puts things into motion and makes things possible with a spirit of major creativity and a vision that thinks outside the box. This embodies the “ESSKA spirit.”

I must also mention, my dear Michael, that you have been a very important element in my presidency. Your seriousness, analytical ability, and unparalleled loyalty make you a great element of stability, almost like a sage!

MH: You served as the ESSKA President during the COVID pandemic, and the ESSKA Congress during your presidency was held virtually. This was a unique experience for the scientific world. Do you think it brought only negative aspects, or did it also present new opportunities for positive change?

DD: The COVID period was indeed very difficult because it consumed a significant portion of my time as ESSKA President, as well as Jacques Menetrey's. It especially deprived me of having a congress in Milan, which I will probably regret forever. As you know, I love “the show.” However, the COVID situation also led us to deep reflection and a constant search for new initiatives to interact, preserve the link with our members, maintain motivation in the office and the board.

This is where we created webinars, continuing the work started by Romain Seil and Martin Lind on the Core Curriculum. For “my” congress, which was postponed once, twice, and then cancelled, we had to take strong measures. This is when we made a real TV show to make the congress virtual, attractive, and visible as “ESSKA at Home.” I worked extensively with Michael Hirschman to find and build an adapted programme. I believe we discovered new things, such as the course for residents. The filming experience was quite amusing, especially being alongside another star, Elizaveta Kon. What a beautiful duo! I loved it.



MH: How did the pandemic affect scientific societies, particularly ESSKA?

DD: The pandemic certainly impacted scientific societies, as people lost the inclination to travel. Many faculties now offer the option to record presentations instead of physically attending. Going to the other side of the world to speak for a quarter of an hour is certainly a bit impractical. However, the human connection remains essential, and it is what strengthens scientific societies. We must always be aware of the influence of trends and the involvement of accompanying companies. Scientific societies should remain the unbiased source for delivering education, providing reliable, positive, and instructive education to young and experienced surgeons alike. It has a wise role that we must not deviate from.

MH: ESSKA's mission is education. Probably the cornerstone of educational activities is the ESSKA European Certification Programme, which has already been launched, and your contribution to this project was very important. How do you feel about this?

DD: Yes, the ESSKA European Certification Programme is finally the culmination of a very long process that began a long time ago when we launched it with Romain Seil's 2016 strategic plan, the Core Curriculum. This structure has become so powerful that we have finally been able to evolve towards a European certification, which is truly an extremely strong outcome for the young surgeons who make this effort. There are several modules, and when we have passed a module, we are certain that the surgeon has the necessary knowledge to provide good practice for their patients. ESSKA can be very proud to have managed to finalize this project because it required a tremendous amount of energy to complete it.

MH: Why should a young orthopaedic surgeon join ESSKA?

DD: It's easy to answer: to learn and gain an unbiased vision of their professional practice, to exchange ideas with others in the field of orthopaedics, to publish and present their own work within the university or private structure, to network and create bonds of friendship, and to have fun and belong to a "family" known as the "ESSKA Spirit." ESSKA is where you find energy!

MH: What should be ESSKA's strategy for the upcoming years?

DD: ESSKA's strategy for the future and the challenge is certainly to continue maintaining its independence and working in harmony in a world driven by business and numbers. Profitability is undoubtedly a challenge, as is navigating the digital world and all the current buzz surrounding topics like robotics and artificial intelligence. However, we must stay close to our professions as surgeons, physicians, physiotherapists, and researchers. We must keep our passion for what we do daily with our patients and magnify it!

MH: David, what is the secret to being an ESSKA leader? I know that you combine humour and stringency (when necessary) to balance, motivate, and inspire other board members. Was this an easy task?

DD: Being a leader is certainly not easy, but it is undoubtedly the most exciting thing you can experience. The role of a leader is to have a vision, ideas, and creativity, but they also have to rely on an operational team. A leader must trust their "lieutenants" because it's impossible for the leader to do everything. This is the strength of a leader: someone who can lead their team, provide pleasure and motivation to those who work with them, share their passions, and inspire others.

Image: Werner Müller's 90th birthday: ESSKA President 2018-2020 David Dejour, ESSKA President 2020-2022 Jacques Menetrey, ESSKA President 1984-1988 Werner Müller, ESSKA President 2022-2024 Roland Becker



MH: You are very well-known for your work and research on the patellofemoral joint and the famous classification of Trochlear dysplasia. Is it still the main topic of your interest, or do you have other scientific interests as well?

DD: Yes, I love the patellofemoral joint because it encompasses a wide range of issues, from pain pathology to traumatic patellar dislocation, which can lead to osteoarthritis. It is relevant in all areas of knee surgery. It also reflects the importance of anatomy in examining the knee. Objective elements in imaging examinations guide us to define thresholds for correction and enable us to treat each element individually. It works not only for the patella but also for the ACL, PCL, multiligaments, and arthritis. Additionally, I enjoy studying the complex anterior cruciate ligament when it presents unique challenges, and I appreciate finding elements that assist surgeons in making decisions. I don't believe in simply saying, "What I'm doing is good, follow me, and don't ask questions..."

MH: How is life outside orthopaedics? What role does your family play?

DD: Life is beautiful and brings happiness. Regarding my "family", I actually have several. There is the one at home, the one at work, and then even an extended family, such as with ESSKA. All are fundamental for my "balance" and "equilibrium" and I love that they are all going in the same direction.

At home, watching my sons becoming "men" with responsibility and independence is a constant marvel.

In my work with my group of orthopaedic surgeons at the Lyon Ortho Clinic, where there are plenty of talented individuals, with my OR nurses, my residents and fellows, my physiotherapist, my sports medicine doctors, and my administrative team, they are always challenging me.

In my multicultural scientific life all over the world, from the youngest to my "old" friends, there is ongoing love.

In summary, we can say that what is needed in life is love, friendship, and fulfilment. When you have all of that, everything is fine, and this is my life dear Michael!!!



Image: An unbelievable experience: ESSKA scepter blessed by the Pope Francois in November 2019, attended with Niek van Dijk, Zhanna Kovalchuk, Francesco Franceschi and Wolfgang Nebelung.



Image: Happy ESSKA President 2018-2020 David H. Dejour

MH: I thank you very much David for this interview, and ESSKA sincerely thanks you for all you have done for the society.

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