

Volume 7

Issue 2

December 2023

ISSN: 3027-5008 (Online)

ISSN: 3027-5016 (Print)

# KOSOVA JOURNAL OF SURGERY

PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE THIRD CLINICAL  
CONGRESS OF THE KOSOVA COLLEGE OF  
SURGEONS, OCTOBER 12-15, 2023



- RIFAT LATIFI: PERSPECTIVE: Swimming Against the Tide and Making It to the Shore: The First Five Years of Kosova College of Surgeons
- BELLAL JOSEPH: The Reemerging Role of Whole Blood in Modern Trauma Care: Is the Whole Greater than the Sum of its Parts?
- RUSSELL J ANDREWS: Efficient Surgery/Neurosurgery: Cutting Costs and Cutting Time Without Cutting Corners
- KRISHNAN GANAPATHY: Quality of Death in Neurosurgical Practice: A 40-year Story from India

## PERSPECTIVE

# Swimming Against the Tide and Making It to the Shore: The First Five Years of Kosova College of Surgeons <sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Rifat Latifi, MD, FACS, FICS, FKCS

Former Minister of Health, Republic of Kosovo  
Trauma, Surgical Critical Care and General Surgeon  
Abrazo West Campus, Phoenix, AZ  
President Kosova College of Surgeons  
Editor, Kosova Journal of Surgery  
Adjunct Professor of Surgery  
University of Arizona, Department of Surgery  
College of Medicine, Tucson, Arizona

Rifat.Latifi@koscs.org; latifi@surgery.arizona.edu; X-Twitter:#rifatlatifi

<sup>2</sup>Parts of this perspective were delivered as President's remarks during the opening ceremony of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Clinical Congress of Kosova College of Surgeons, October 12, 2023 at Emerald Hotel, Prishtine, Kosova.



**Rifat Latifi**  
Editor-in- Chief

For the last few months, I thought a lot about how to title this perspective. As a former journalist, an author of hundreds of articles, scientific papers, 20 books, and hundreds of book chapters, titles have been my “specialty”. Yet, for this one I was having difficulties. Not having a title, was procrastinating the writing up of this piece. Most people write the story, their editorial or their essay first, and then the title comes out of it. I, on the other hand, need a title first, and at least a working title in order to fill the empty pages and write whatever I am working on. But coming up with this title was difficult and it was complex and complicated.

It needed to reflect my own state of mind, that of great achievements, the current state of the Kosova College of Surgeons (KCS) that is succeeding beyond anyone’s imagination, except mine, and everything that occurred during the first five years of its existence. Something that the reader will readily understand the challenges, the achievements, all “the dancing” that it was required dealing with all involved in this process. Everything that directly or indirectly happened over many months of planning, and finally, establishing KCS just days before the end of 2018. I was trying to convince everyone, who listened, that this is good for every existing surgical society, all thirteen of them, good for every surgeon of Kosova, and most importantly good for the future of surgery and healthcare system of Kosova altogether. It needed to reflect the support of several people and their enthusiastic endorsement of the idea, their volunteer involvement in the leadership, in the committee, in the Board of Regents, in the editorial board of the Kosova Journal of Surgery, in the annual Clinical Congress, all of which required in frequent meetings after long days at work,

instead of spending time with their families. For many, these were unchartered territories but, but most went with it and endorsed the idea. And, of course, the title needed to reflect some of those who actively ignored the entire idea of KCS as impossible, undoable, and unnecessary, or boycotted actively or passively aggressively.

But today, in this beautiful fall in Kosova, we Kosovan surgeons together with our friends from several countries of the world are celebrating five years of officially establishing KCS.

*“Forty-five and ninety-five years from today the new generations of surgeons of Kosova and KCS will celebrate half and one century of existence respectively.”*

This generation of us who carried the burden of pushing the idea and made possible creation of KCS with both contribution with our own time and money, decades from now will not be around physically, but will be around in the minds and memories of all, and our pictures will be in the walls of the museum of KCS. The stories and pictures will remind the world that there were Martin Franklins and all of the American College of Surgeons in Kosova too.

When I brought all these requirements that the future title of this perspective would reflect, the only phrase that came and stuck with me was: “Swimming against the (constant tide) and making it to the shore”. Let’s discuss “the making it to the shore” first. To this, well known say, the US President, Woodrow Wilson added “The man who is swimming against the stream knows the strength of it.” He was right.

Did we really make it to the shore, I ask myself? Yes, we did, is my answer without any hesitation. This is why I say this unequivocally. At the start, we set out to get established officially. We did. We set the goal to create an organization that will be run with professional administration of KCS, and we did it. We set the goal to use the telemedicine of Kosova to organize educational programs during the darkest times that the world saw in recent years (COVID-19)-we did it. We set the goal to organize a Clinical Congress -this is the third one, and have already signed up almost all speakers for the next congress. We were the first organization (to my knowledge) to cancel the first congress that was supposed to take place in 2020. We predicted that the world will be different with Covid-19. We set the goal to create committees of KCS- we did. All 22 of them (link). We set the goal to establish an official publication that will serve

as a journal of KCS- we did. We adopted and restarted with great inauguration event the National Library of Kosova the publication of Kosova Journal of Surgery and have published 3 issues. We selected a world-class editorial board, and received ISSN numbers. We set the goal to that KCS to have its own Bulletin – and we have it.

Allow me to expand on this issue (ISSN) a bit more. On October 7, while on call for trauma, surgical critical care and emergency surgery at Abrazo West campus, Goodyear, Arizona, a suburb of west Phoenix, just past midnight, I got a phone call from Abrazo Transfer Center. The caller introduced herself as Natasha and “warned” as she is required to tell me that we were on the recording line. She asked me to connect me with a referring doctor from one of the smaller hospitals in rural Arizona. I responded that this is “Dr. Latifi ‘, and Natasha immediately changed the conversation to: “Ah, Dr. Latifi, congratulations on your ISSN ‘. I was taken by surprise and asked, “What did you say?” She replied, “Congratulations on obtaining the ISSN for Kosova Journal of Surgery ‘. My jaw dropped and my face and soul were smiling. “Wow”, I replied, and asked her “how do you know about that”? She said: “I follow those things and I am so happy for you”. I thanked her, and then I spoke with the physician who wanted to transfer a patient with severe head injury associated with a small epidural bleed. I accepted the patient, but the smile never left my face. Even as I was editing and rewriting these reflections on this perspective while traveling from Phoenix to Washington DC, to Vienna and Prishtina for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Clinical Congress of Kosova College of Surgeons.

So yes, we did make it to the shore, but now we have to stay in the shore. Moreover, we have to build what we said we would, with the support of our friends, various government agencies from several countries around the world, our own philanthropist, and finally ourselves, the surgeons. We will call this: “The Educational Center of KCS” that will have several departments, including:

1. The Clinical Simulation Center (CSC) –(CSC)
2. The Advanced Laparoscopic and Arthroscopic Training Laboratory (ALATL);
3. The Telemedicine and Telesurgery Outreach Program (TTSOP);
4. The Trauma Educational Training Programs (TETP);
5. Office for surgical guidelines and protocols (OSGP); and
6. Clinical Research Unit (CRU), in addition to administrative offices, conference rooms, and modern auditoriums.

Finally, we will build the museum of KCS that will proudly display the history of surgery in Kosova and the region over the last century. Only, when all this is done, I will rest in peace and consider “mission accomplished” and that not only we have remained on the shores of a massive ocean that threaten many times to swallow us, but we have achieved what we were set for. Most importantly, we kept the promise.

This issue of Kosova Journal of Surgery, as with previous issues represent papers presented at the Clinical Congresses, is publishing the best papers selected for the podium presentation (original research) or state of the art reviews from our invited international guest speakers, most of whom are Honorary fellows of KCS. They came to us from different corners of the world. Next year, we will publish three issues of the journal, the third one being state of the art papers on select surgical issues led by guest editors, of which one will be from Kosova and one renowned international guest editor.

The papers selected for publications, reflect the theme of this year’s congress, “Improving the Quality of Surgical Services”, which will be the motto of our work for the entire upcoming year, highlight the safety of all surgical services, and patient safety. We have chosen this theme, because this was part of the reason to create the KCS, part of the reason why we swam against the constant tides. We did this, because our patients are at the center of everything that KCS does and will continue to do, everything that we need to do, as surgeons, and as a healthcare system. Our patients should know that we will always do only what is in their best interest and with the latest technologies and principles of surgical care. Only this way, patients will trust us, and will not seek care elsewhere and incur catastrophic expenses. It is a theme that calls us to think critically, to challenge and to change the status quo, and envision a future where surgical science, techniques and technologies continue to evolve, saving and improving lives in ways we never thought was possible.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Clinical Congress agenda was filled with a variety of sessions, symposia, world renowned international guest speakers, our fellow compatriots from the diaspora, our colleagues from the region, and the members of Kosova College of Surgeons. From the keynote addresses and named lectures that memorialize and remember our mentors and teachers from Kosova, to interactive sessions, this year’s congress will offer an experience that promises to not only inform but inspire. This event was also an opportunity to learn from each other, celebrate our

successes and face the surgical challenges in the era of uncertainty with determination and clear vision.

But our Clinical Congress was not just about what happened on the podium and what is being presented. It was also about the connections we made, the collaborations that emerged and the friendships that we created. It was about the sense of community that we as surgeons share—a community dedicated to the well-being of our patients and the advancement of our field, anywhere in the world. And it was much more. We are creating new medical diplomatic connections and celebrating the new collaboration agreements that we signed with the Argentinian Surgical Society, Bolivian Surgical Society, Buenos Aires University, and Paraguay Surgical Society, countries that otherwise have not recognized us yet as an independent state. As mentioned above, we celebrate the new ISSN numbers for KJS both print (3027-5016) and online (3027-5008) and the publications of Issue 2 and volume 7 this fall.

Medical diplomacy has already given the first result. At the dawn of our Congress, we successfully held the first ATLS course in Kosova, in collaboration with Stanford Health from North Dakota, that we have chosen as the most important partner of KCS this year.

At this congress we inaugurated five new Vice- Presidents of KCS. From Albania - Arben Beqiri, from Austria - Lumnije Kqiku-Biblekaj, from Germany - Valon Baraliu, and from Northern Macedonia - Ilir Hasani, and from USA Mentor Ahmeti, whose mission is to expand our reach in each country and continent, by getting Albanian surgeons wherever they are organized under one umbrella.

In this Congress we continued our tradition to honor our professors and renowned surgeons who have served the people best and have dedicated their life to surgery and healthcare overall with the Prof. Sami Haxhibeqiri, Lifetime Achievement Award. From Albania – Prof. Arben Gjata, from Northern Macedonia – Prof. Hasim Saliu, whereas from Kosova, this year we made an exception and honored a true hero of medicine and healthcare of Kosova, a non-surgeon, but thinks and acts surgically, Prof. Isuf Dedushaj.

As this Congress celebrated the five years of KCS short story, we are welcomed 20 new Honorary Fellows of KCS from the USA, Qatar, India, Italy, Albania and Kosova. Also, during this congress we honored those who worked hard to complete the residency basic courses led by Prof. Sadik Lullaku, Executive Director of KCS, those who worked hard with industry to create new partnerships, and

those published and made us proud in the international arena Prof. Qendrese Daka and other awards.

Let's get back to the title of this perspective. The past years were groundbreaking, history making, productive, and very exciting. Yet, they were challenging, and at times straight out painful episodes. Creating an institution like KCS requires all of us to be on board with our soul and body, our minds and with our pocketbooks as well. Need money to create the infrastructure, administration that at bare minimum need full-time high-end employees who can run the administration, technology, public relations, regulatory issues that come up, money to travel and host guests and establish and forge new medical diplomatic relations. Need financial support to administer and make them functional in all 22 committees of KCS. Need financial support to publish the KJS, professional editorial assistance, professionals to design it and maintain the website of KCS and KJS, and finally managing and publishing the Bulletin of KCS. Most surgical associations and Surgical Colleges' financial support comes from membership support. As a young college, KCS has received none from our memberships thus far, and all the congresses, educational programs, publications in the journal, all were free. This year, we introduced a meager of 50 Euro annual membership to include the annual Congress, workshops and seminars, and access to our journal. It's nothing, but it is a start.

The government of Kosova has not supported KCS yet, but I believe that we will become the GPS of Kosova's healthcare, by trailblazing the future of surgery, and not only (1,2). The Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education and Science do not support the KJS because the KCS is not an institute or University, despite the fact that we are changing the dismal state of scientific publications in Kosova as documented our study published in 2019, which showed that Kosova is amongst the last six countries in the world for research, and KJS is the only medical scientific journal (3,4). Lack of governmental support makes even more challenging the process of creating a sustainable professional infrastructure. There are a few more challenges that decades from now will look incredibly imprudent and not acceptable to the new generations of surgeons and other scientists, when reading the history of KCS and KJS. The University of Prishtina still does not accept the papers of local authors published at KJS as research work toward their promotion and academic promotions. Fascinating though, the university of Northern Macedonia does accept papers published at KJS toward their PhD completion of their students.

KCS will continue to implement a major transformation program, this author identified while being Minister of Health for a short tenure, using partnerships and medical diplomacy (5). Many people and countries around the world want to help us, but first we need to help our cause. The participation with some finances from each member of KCS will ensure financial sustainability and growth. To those who have become members of Kosova College of Surgeons, thank you. This is our college, our house of surgery, and we owe it to the next generations of surgeons to build it stronger, better, with a good foundation, that no tide will take it back to the ocean. Becoming a Fellow of Kosova, College of Kosova should be the highlight of every surgeon of Kosova.

We have started this journey together, and together we succeeded and will accomplish much more. The tides will calm down, and swimming and sailing into the future will be easier, and those who thought that our objective was not worthy, will quietly join our mission. Let us use this anniversary of Congress of Kosova College of Surgeons as an opportunity to learn and grow professionally and become better. Let's face the challenges before us, knowing that they are steps towards progress and growth and international recognition as an example of hard work and perseverance. Thank you and let's continue this amazing journey together! Let's walk together in the future and remember: Failure is Not an Option. To those who did not believe us, come and join us and become part of early history.

## References

1. Latifi R. Transforming Surgery of Kosova in the Era of Uncertainty: What Will it take? *Kos J Surg.* 2021 Apr 5;1:11-22. <https://koscs.org/en/kosova-journal-of-surgery-v5-en/>
2. Latifi R. Editorial: The First Chapter of the New Book of Kosova College of Surgeons. *Kos J Surg.* 2022 Jan 6:1:5-6. <https://kosovajournalofsurgery.net/kosova-journal-of-surgery-volume-6/>
3. Latifi R. Editorial: Kosova Journal of Surgery Growing, as Kosova College of Surgeons is Making Great Progress. *Kos J Surg.* 2023 Mar 7:1:5-6. <https://kosovajournalofsurgery.net/kosova-journal-of-surgery-volume-7-issue-1/>
4. Latifi R, Smiley A, Asim M, El-Menyar A. Biomedical Publications as a Reflection of Research Capacity: Analysis of Last Two Decades (1998-2019) of Research Productivity in Kosova. *Kos J Surg.* 2021 Apr 5:1:63-74. <https://kosovajournalofsurgery.net/kosova-journal-of-surgery/>
5. Latifi R. Perspective: Transformation of the Healthcare System in Kosova and Medical Diplomacy. *Kos J Surg.* 2022 Oct 6:2:4-11. <https://kosovajournalofsurgery.net/kosova-journal-of-surgery-volume-6-2/>