Challenges in Laparoscopy & Robotics 2013
Beijing hosts annual event on minimally invasive surgery

The meeting “Challenges in Laparoscopy & Robotics” has been one of the most important and exciting annual events for institutions and urologists who are building up their skills and expertise for minimally invasive surgery.

This year the course coordinators were Dr. Inderbir Gill, Dr. Vito Pansadoro, Dr. Xuyang Sun and Dr. Xu Zhang. For the first time the annual event was held outside Europe at the Chinese PLA General Hospital (PLA) in Beijing, China, as part of the first official joint cooperation between the Chinese and European urology communities.

Fostering the tradition for excellence, the congress provided participants the opportunity to experience a broad range of live surgeries, case presentations and key lectures by the world’s leading urologists who specialise in laparoscopy and robotics.

On the opening day, following a short introduction to the congress with keynote remarks from the General and Medical Directors of the PLA General Hospital (Figure 1), the Chairmen of the Congress (Dr. Pansadoro, Dr. Zhang and Dr. Gill) and the vice president of the Italian Society of Urology Dr. Vespasiani, the first case was held with Dr. Bollens performing a laparoscopic left radical nephrectomy.

For the entire day, percutaneous and retroperitoneal laparoscopic and robotic radical and partial nephrectomies (with and without hilar clamping) were performed by experienced surgeons including Drs. Zhang, Stoelzelburg, Jun Dong, Bin Fu, Li, Antonio Alcaraz and the author (Breda) (Figure 2). Dr. Gill performed a robotic right nephrectomy with a caval thrombectomy. This was an extremely difficult procedure performed with excellent results.

In the evening we attended the Gala Dinner which also featured spectacular shows organized and presented by the Nursing Team from the PLA Hospital (Figure 3).

Bladder cases
On Friday the procedures focused on bladder cases with laparoscopic and robotic cystectomies performed by Drs. Gill and V. Robotic adrenalectomy was performed by Dr. Jens Rassweiler, while Prof. Pansadoro led a robotic ureteral reimplantation. Dr. Bollens also successfully performed a laparoscopic vesicovaginal fistula repair while Prof. Jantchev performed a laparoscopic retroperitoneal lymphadenectomy.

For the social programme that evening, we enjoyed a fantastic faculty dinner which took place at the Imperial Summer Palace (Figure 4).

On Saturday, following tradition, the programme was fully dedicated to prostate cancer. There were seven radical prostatectomies including an extraperitoneal prostatectomy done robotically by Dr. Stoelzelburg, a standard robotic prostatectomy by Dr. Patel and a robotic prostatectomy performed by Dr. Boccardi during which he showed the “Boccardi technique.”

Prof. Pansadoro also performed an extra-facial prostatectomy using a technique he developed. Finally, Dr. Zhang showed his robotic approach in performing a large-size prostatectomy. (Figure 5)

Without a doubt, the conference was a success with over 1,000 participants including invited faculty members from China and other Asian countries (Figure 6 and 7).

For their outstanding hospitality and efficient organization, I extend my congratulations to all the faculty, nurses and staff members of the PLA General Hospital, Department of Urology, under the direction of Dr. Xu Zhang.

And as in previous years, the conference would have not been possible without the magnificent help and collaboration from the secretarial Fedra Congressi directed by Laura Enrico and sponsors Karl Storz, Intuitive, Chindex, B. Medical, Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, Astellas, Baxter, Astra Zeneca, Bayer, Ipsen, MSD and Stryker. My congratulations also to Prof. Pansadoro for maintaining the high quality of this event which is now in its tenth year.

Finally, as one of the meeting’s course directors, I would like to extend the invitation to the “Challenges in Laparoscopy & Robotics 2014” which will return to Europe.

To be held in Barcelona, Spain, the 2014 conference will be held at the Fira Palace Hotel, with all the surgeries to be transmitted live from Fundació Puigvert Hospital under the direction of Dr. H. Villacervio. The course directors are Dr. A. Breda, Dr. I. Gill and Prof. Pansadoro.

We hope to see you all in Barcelona!