



In Memory of Dr. Zeki Oral

Ilhan ELMACI

Professor of Neurosurgery, Acıbadem Kent Hospital, İzmir, Türkiye

Corresponding author: Ilhan ELMACI ✉ ilhanelmaci@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT


Dr. Zeki Oral was born in Anamur in 1940. He completed his primary and secondary education in Anamur and his high school education in Bursa. In 1966, he graduated from Istanbul Faculty of Medicine and, in the same year, began his neurosurgery residency at Hacettepe Faculty of Medicine. Following his residency, he completed his military service at Kasımpaşa Naval Hospital, where he subsequently continued to work as a specialist physician. He then began his first post-residency instructor position at Taksim Training Hospital. With the enactment of the full-time practice law, he resigned from public service. After working for a period as a private practitioner, he accepted an invitation to serve as Chief of Neurosurgery Department at Bakırköy Mental and Neurological Diseases Hospital. After twenty years in this role, he decided to retire in 2012. He passed away on March 4, 2025.

KEYWORDS: Dr Zeki Oral, Turkish neurosurgeon, In memory of

Dr. Zeki Oral was born in Anamur in 1940. He completed his primary and secondary education in Anamur and attended high school in Bursa. He graduated from the Istanbul Faculty of Medicine in 1966, and in that same year, he began his neurosurgery residency at Hacettepe University Faculty of Medicine. Upon completing his residency, he fulfilled his military service at Kasımpaşa Naval Hospital, where he continued to serve as a specialist physician. His first academic appointment after residency was at Taksim Training Hospital. With the enactment of the full-time law, he was required to resign from public service. After several years working as a private practitioner, he accepted an invitation to become Clinical Chief at Bakırköy Mental and Neurological Diseases Hospital, a position he held for twenty years until his retirement in 2012. Dr. Oral passed away on March 4, 2025.

As a distinguished neurosurgeon and dedicated educator, Dr. Oral was a quintessential master of his field, embodying exceptional knowledge, experience, clarity, and patience. He exemplified the principle that professional success in neurosurgery arises from a rigorous clinical process—beginning with the initial patient encounter and neurological examination, proceeding through the selection of appropriate radiological studies, and culminating in thoughtful treatment planning. These principles, together with surgical proficiency, form the foundation of neurosurgical training worldwide, and Dr. Oral's teaching reflected them fully as he guided his students to lis-



Ilhan ELMACI  : 0000-0001-9433-0307



This work is licensed by "Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-4.0 International (CC)".

ten attentively, ask the right questions, and manage each step of patient care with professionalism.

We experienced this firsthand in the outpatient clinic with Dr. Oral. We presented patients' medical histories along with the findings of their physical and neurological examinations, reviewed the radiological studies together, and formulated treatment plans under his guidance. This process was profoundly instructive, teaching each of his students the importance of professional demeanor, attentive listening to patients and their families, and effective clinical management through asking the right questions.

I recall the engaging and educational morning rounds during which in-patients were reviewed and updates were presented by the senior resident. Decisions regarding follow-up and treatment planning were made collectively. As a fair and impartial professional Dr. Oral maintained an equitable and impartial approach toward all trainees. At the end, each resident performed all surgical procedures required by their level of seniority in a timely manner, completed their thesis by the residency exam date, therefore passing their exam successfully, and obtaining their specialty certification.

Dr. Zeki Oral's character was shaped by strong principles, integrity, and a clear worldview. He spoke directly and expressed his thoughts without ambiguity. He valued clarity and had little tolerance for unnecessary complexity. His humanistic and democratic perspective guided his conduct in both clinical and personal interactions. He did not approve of secrecy or closed-door dealings. In difficult or contentious situations he would first listen to both sides, understand the issue in detail, before expressing a considered opinion. Especially during our daily morning clinic meetings, he would raise a topic or tell a relevant anecdote to point to the solution to the problem. The intended message was always delivered effectively.

He was a good man, a skilled neurosurgeon, an instructive clinical chief, and a mentor. Although he appeared strict due to his adherence to principles, he was open to progress and new practices.

We trained during a period when microsurgery was rapidly expanding in scope and influence. Dr. Oral welcomed our eagerness to learn with genuine enthusiasm and unwavering support. He set clear expectations within the limits of the available resources and ensured that our development progressed appropriately. Before attempting any technique we had not yet mastered, he emphasized the necessity of completing the

requisite "learning curve" or performing the procedure under the guidance of an experienced mentor.

Neurosurgery residency training is not solely about performing operations or developing technical skills; it is fundamentally about shaping a professional. The discipline comprises both art and craft. The first involves the human and aesthetic approach, while the second encompasses skill. It is through the harmony of these two that professional depth can be achieved. What follows then depends on the energy, ambition, and choices of the specialist after training.

I have many colleagues who were trained under his guidance. Each of them worked and continues to work as neurosurgeons who are recognized for their knowledge, experience, dedication, and diligence.

Among Dr.Oral's, the main awards were:

- Service Award, Turkish Neurosurgical Society, 2004
- Service Award, Society of Nervous System Surgery, 2015
- Certificate of Appreciation, 50th year as a specialist in neurosurgery, Turkish Neurosurgical Society, 2021

Dr. Oral also served as founding editor of the "Düşünen Adam Dergisi - The Journal of Psychiatry and Neurological Sciences. His leadership and vision have made significant contributions to the academic field beyond his roles in surgery and teaching.

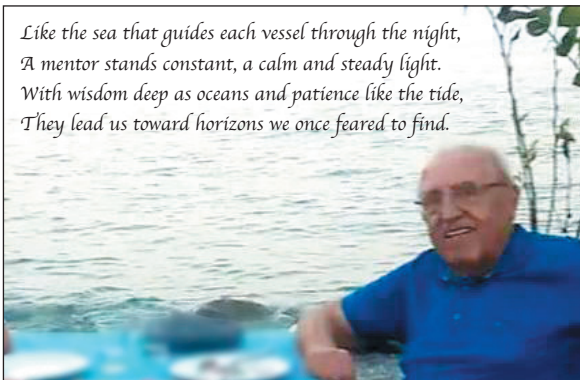
He emphasized the importance of learning new things and pursuing activities outside of one's career. After retiring in 2012, he returned to his hometown of Anamur in Mersin and devoted himself to agriculture, particularly to growing bananas, one of the region's most important crops. He gained sufficient knowledge in this field and obtained a certificate. The happiness he felt from working the land and ultimately obtaining a tangible product brought him great joy. (Reference: Mehmet Seçer, "Ustalardan Hayata Dair: Zeki Oral," *Spinal Peripheral Nerve Surgery Bulletin Journal*, April 2019, Issue: 83)

He saw his profession not only as a job that brought him happiness, but also as a field that defined meaningful human relationships. He was charming at social gatherings and meetings, and his circle was always crowded. He was a respected person in terms of his personal and professional relationships, whose opinions were held in high regard, sought after, and missed.

We remember and commemorate our esteemed Dr. Zeki Oral with respect, gratitude, and longing.

Dr. İlhan Elmacı

*Like the sea that guides each vessel through the night,
A mentor stands constant, a calm and steady light.
With wisdom deep as oceans and patience like the tide,
They lead us toward horizons we once feared to find.*



Editorial Response

Dr. Zeki Oral will be remembered as a prominent neurosurgeon, a committed teacher, and a person of morality and a mentor whose influence extended to generations of trainees. His dedication to clinical excellence, ethical practice and thoughtful mentorship exemplify the enduring values of neurosurgery. The academic community remembers him with deep respect and gratitude.

Editorial Board of Turkish Neurosurgery