



Obituary

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In Memoriam: Professor Şükrü Aykol

January 02, 1954 – May 19, 2021

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*With them the Seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with my own Hand laboured it to grow,
And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd --
"I came like Water, and like Wind I go."*

- Omar Khayyam, The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

The wisdom that he laboured to grow in humanity, love, teamwork and the precious memories that we shared together will always be with us (Figure 1).

Şükrü Aykol was born on January 2nd, 1954 in Eskisehir. Following completion of Technical High School in Eskisehir, he earned his medical degree from Istanbul University Cerrahpaşa Medical School in 1977. He started his neurosurgical residency program at Numune Hospital with his mentor Professor Hızır Alp, chief of the neurosurgical department. In 1979, Prof. Alp established Ankara's third and Turkey's eighteenth medical faculty in collaboration with Professor Onur Kumbaracıbası under the name of Ankara Economic and Commercial Sciences Academy, Faculty of Medicine. This institution laid the foundations of today's Gazi University Faculty of Medicine. When Prof. Alp resigned from Ankara Numune Hospital, he offered a position to his then resident Dr. Aykol to work together in this newly established department. Dr. Aykol accepted this offer and quit his residency program at Numune Hospital to restart his residency with Prof. Alp as the first neurosurgery resident. He has completed his neurosurgical residency in 1987 at Gazi University Faculty of Medicine Department of Neurosurgery and completed his military service at Corlu Military Hospital. He worked as a consultant neurosurgeon in Ankara Diskapi State Hospital and Samsun State Hospital. Then in 1990



Figure 1: Professor Dr. Şükrü Aykol.

started as a faculty member at Gazi University Department of Neurosurgery as an associate professor.

With the encouragement of his mentor Prof. Alp, he focused on stereotactic and functional neurosurgery which was relatively a new field of specialization in neurosurgery. His curiosity on the treatment of trigeminal neuralgia resulted in a fruitful collaboration with Professor Yücel Kanpolat which helped him

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to gain significant experience in pain surgery. His fast and safe technique that he improved over the years in percutaneous radiofrequency thermocoagulation for the treatment of trigeminal neuralgia, relieves thousands of patients suffering from pain (Figure 2). Patients who had unbearable pain were always treated on the same day. He always advised his residents and fellows not to delay the treatment of pain patients and encouraged scheduling the treatment as soon as possible. Percutaneous cordotomy and microvascular decompression was performed like writing a poem in his gifted hands. Following every single microvascular decompression case, Prof. Aykol used to draw challenging parts of the surgery on the sketch board (Figure 3). This practice gave the opportunity of a precise follow-up of these patients. His drawings were concise but elucidatory. In 1997, he was appointed as a professor of Neurosurgery at Gazi University Faculty of Medicine (Figure 4).

Prof. Aykol and his colleagues spent a great effort to bring the Leksell Gamma Knife Radiosurgery to Gazi University. His foresight in the value of radiosurgery enabled Gazi University to begin treating patients in the year 2004 with Gamma Knife Radiosurgery, which was at the time the second Gamma Knife Center in Turkey. In 2006, he became the Department chair and served this post until his retirement in 2021 for 15 years.

Prof. Aykol was an excellent observer, not only in his medical career but also in his life (Figure 5). Following a few overseas visits, he got interested in windsurfing. After a couple of



Figure 2: Dr. Aykol performing percutaneous radiofrequency thermocoagulation to his patient suffering from trigeminal neuralgia.

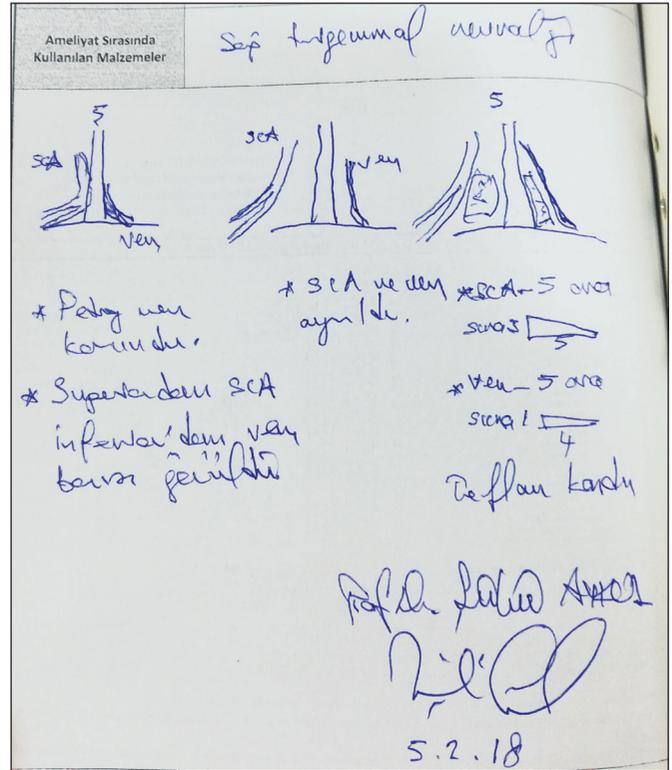


Figure 3: One of Dr. Aykol's drawing after microvascular decompression surgery for trigeminal neuralgia.



Figure 4: A photo from Dr. Aykol's professorship ceremony with his mentor Prof. Dr. Hızır Alp in 1997.

dedicated days during his first vacation in the Mediterranean, he started spending hours on his surfboard cruising around. He was a good left back soccer player (Figure 6). His philosophy in stereotactic surgery helped him to be a good golf player in a very short time. He was an open minded mentor who always encouraged the juniors for new and different outlooks in surgery as well as in life (Figure 7). Everything was done calmly in his hands, however, you will need to be able to walk briskly if you were to follow him during his rounds at the clinic or ICU.



Figure 5: Prof. Dr. Şükrü Aykol and Prof. Dr. Yücel Kanpolat.

The loss of Professor Şükrü Aykol left a beloved wife and son, friends, and thousands of patients treated with his peaceful reassurance. His philosophy, dedication, and clear sighted approach to every situation are lessons that we will never forget and that will always guide us to find comfort and calmness in life (Figure 8).



Figure 6: A photo from our soccer team after a victory in the Gazi University football tournament.



Figure 7: Prof. Dr. Aykol giving his lecture on trigeminal neuralgia and percutaneous retrogasserian thermocoagulation in a hands-on course in our department in 2019.



Figure 8: A photo from Dr. Aykol's retirement ceremony with the clinical staff of our department and his wife Dr. Nevin Aykol. (Dr. Sükrü Aykol, Dr. Memduh Kaymaz, Dr. Aydemir Kale, Dr. Nevin Aykol, Dr. Emrah Celtikci, Dr. Fikret Dogulu, Dr. Mesut Emre Yaman, Dr. Burak Karaaslan, Dr. Hakan Emmez).