

# FESSH Award – my Journey to Vienna

Thilo Ludwig Schenck

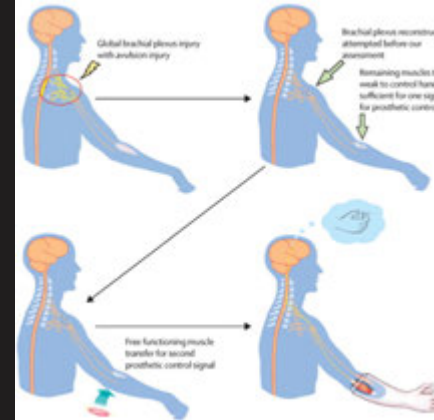
I applied in 2013 for the FESSH Travelling Award to deepen my knowledge on peripheral nerve repair and upper extremity reconstruction. When I applied, I was working as a resident in my sixth year of training at the Department for Plastic Surgery and Hand Surgery at the Klinikum rechts der Isar in Munich. Since beginning of my training, I have been fascinated by the possibilities of upper extremity reconstruction, especially peripheral nerve transfers and brachial plexus surgery. In the recent years, I have tried to attend and perform as much operations on peripheral nerves as possible. Prof. Machens and Prof. Giunta have been excellent teachers on that matter and have encouraged me to lay my clinical focus on this topic.

I used the FESSH Traveling Award, to visit one of Europe's leading addresses in peripheral nerve reconstruction, which is the Division of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery at the Medical University of Vienna. I was warmly welcomed not only by Prof. Aszmann, but by his whole team. All of them were always eager to share their common philosophy of peripheral nerve surgery and were brilliant teachers on that matter. In long discussions with Prof. Aszmann and his team, the topics of brachial plexus surgery, targeted muscle reinnervation, amputation stump optimization and many more were discussed. I was also thoroughly introduced to the topic of neuroma treatment and prevention. I can lively remember Prof. Aszmann singing his mantra "A nerve needs a home" multiple times in the operation room.

Among the operations that I observed, were cases of brachial plexus palsies, nerve transfers, neuroma treatments, targeted muscle reinnervation procedures, facial reanimations and many more. I was also able to attend one of Prof. Aszmann's elective hand amputations. This brand new concept aims at replacing a severely injured hand by a myoelectric prosthesis. The concept was published in Lancet with the title: "Bionic reconstruction to restore hand function after brachial plexus injury: a case series of three patients."



Prof. Aszmann and his team at the AKH Vienna



Aszmann OC, Roche AD, Salminger S, Paternostro-Sluga T, Herceg M, Sturma A, Hofer C, Farina D. Bionic reconstruction to restore hand function after brachial plexus injury: a case series of three patients. *Lancet*. 2015 Feb 24.



Also very fascinating was the set-up of his consultation hour for extremity reconstruction. An interdisciplinary team, consisting of medical doctors, engineers, physiotherapists, orthopedic technicians and students is present each time to discuss the individual patient and to set up a treatment plan.

In addition to my clinical interest, I have set my scientific focus on this topic as well. Since 2009, I have been working on anatomic and histological studies of nerve transfers in the upper extremity and presented results of these studies at many national and international meetings, including the FESSH Meeting 2013. During the time of my visit in Vienna, I was happy to publish my first article on a nerve transfer named "Anatomical and histomorphometric observations on the transfer of the anterior interosseous nerve to the deep branch of the ulnar nerve." in the Journal of Hand Surgery (European Volume).

I want to thank the FESSH heartfully for giving me this excellent opportunity. My journey to Vienna was extremely educational for me and definitely broadened my spectrum in this field. I hope I will be able to implement as much as possible of what I learned in our hospital in Munich.

Thank you FESSH,  
Thank you Prof. Aszmann

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