For visiting neurosurgeons 2016
You are cordially welcome to the Department of Neurosurgery at the Helsinki University Central Hospital!

The population of Finland in 2015 is around 5,500,000 people. There are five university hospitals with neurosurgical departments in Finland, and each neurosurgical department gets referrals mainly from neurologists. The public step-wise (Health Centers - District Hospitals – Central Hospitals – University Hospitals) health care system, in which every Finn is insured, guarantees that all citizens get equal treatment in Finland. Private practice in Neurosurgery is mainly outpatient visits and low volumes of spine surgery.

The Helsinki University Hospital (HUCH) with its 22,000 employees (of which around 3,000 are doctors) and many hospital buildings is scattered over several different areas; the main campus area is located >1 km to the north from the Töölö Hospital where the Department of Neurosurgery resides in addition to orthopedic (traumas), plastic and hand surgery. These departments will move to the main campus area in 2021 to a completely new building. There was a recent organization change and we could remain as an independent and compact department belonging to the Head and Neck Surgery Unit together with Neurology, ENT, Ophtalmology and Maxillofacial surgery and Dentistry.

Helsinki Neurosurgery

Helsinki Neurosurgery (Est. 1932) is one the most active neurosurgical units in the world, with close to 3500 annual operations (including endovascular for aneurysms) performed by 18 staff neurosurgeons and 7 residents (and two interventionalists). Up to 40% of the operations are emergencies. All neurosurgical fields are covered: 700 brain tumours, >1200 spine cases, 600 head injuries, >100 functional etc. Helsinki Neurosurgery is the reference centre for 1.8 million people (catchment area; population responsibility). Therefore, there is no selection bias in our scientific series as we have to take care of all patients of our catchment area.

Helsinki Neurosurgery is especially proud of its cerebrovascular surgery with more than 500 cases a year. Annually, more than 200 cerebral aneurysms (40% unruptured) are treated – up to 45% of the ruptured and 35% of the unruptured by endovascular means. The institutional experience exceeds 13 000 cerebral aneurysms and AVMs, of which we have large institutional databases. Some of the patients are coming from other parts of Finland and Europe, and we serve as a referral centre for difficult cerebrovascular diseases. We are also used to train foreign neurosurgeons, and we have around 100-200 foreign neurosurgeons visiting the department every year, more than 2000 since 1997 from Europe and all over the world. The staff neurosurgeons have visited numerous international neurosurgical centres, and all of them have PhD degrees on basic or clinical research. Most of the staff neurosurgeons have attained neurosurgical subspecialty, too. Please see:

www.hus.fi/neurosurgery

Helsinki Neurosurgery (staff around 250 altogether) has two wards (ward 6 and 7) with 50 beds and a 16-bed ICU and two isolation rooms for MRSA patients (very few in Finland). We have five ORs with 32
nurses and six anesthesiologists dedicated only for neurosurgery- one of the OR’s for spine is in another building. We have more than 6000 out-patient visits annually, and all operated patients come to a follow-up examination postoperatively after some months. The average stay at the ward is 2.9 days for all patients; patients undergoing spinal procedures are typically discharged on the first postoperative day. Naturally, the main goal is quality in patient care but with cost-effectiveness in mind.

Comments by previous guests:

*Effectiveness and quality of care
Prof M Gazi Yasargil: ‘Go-go surgery’
Prof Ossama Al-Mefty: ‘Good-good surgery’
Prof Nicolas de Tribolet: ‘Quiet effectiveness’;

Some strengths of the Department

Everybody in the OR and wards is very well aware of their position and role, and everyone does their job without delays, but also without unnecessary fuss. In addition, the small hospital building (short distance between ER, ICU, CT, OR), dedicated and highly trained neurosurgical nurses, and experienced neuroanesthesiologists make things run smoothly.

- In general, patients are well-educated, too; there are no illiterate people in Finland
- The Department belongs to an extremely wide network of clinical and basic research centres
- The staff is familiar with several languages and is also used to frequent visitors (100-200/year, 2000 since 1997)

We believe that national and international collaboration is extremely important for neurosurgeons; everybody becomes blind to his/her own practice in time. We enjoy having visitors, and we have experienced that the learning process is bilateral. We love to get feedback to improve our ways of doing things – we encourage you to give ideas and criticism in a constructive way! Since our doors are open for all visitors, everybody can evaluate whether our results correspond to published ones.

- Huge number of cases increases the skills of the whole staff making them very experienced

Some weaknesses:

- Shortage of space (BUT remember, neurosurgeons do the operations together with a dedicated staff; not the ‘walls’).
- HUH is wide-spread (e.g. Department of Neurology is in a different building).

When visiting the OR (and the Department), please notice the following important things that we want you to appreciate:
- **Please introduce yourself to the personnel on arrival.**

- Please do not bring your mobile phone in to the OR; if you have urgent matters, you can follow the operation on the screen outside the OR.

- Please do not enter the OR during preparations. Nurses need space and focus while preparing the patient for anesthesia and surgery. You may enter same time with the operating surgeon and only after different cannulations have been applied (not before application of the urinary catheter).

- Do not run around in the OR or back and forth during the operations and avoid being too close to the sterile instruments or the patient when not scrubbing- we have good monitors inside the OR and lobby, too, to observe the surgeries.

- Please keep your voice down during the operations; we like to listen to the radio/CDs but speaking loud and suddenly may disturb the neurosurgeons at work and it might be dangerous to the patient.

- All discussion in the OT by the visitors should be in English for the neurosurgeon and the other staff to understand.

- Photographing is allowed (without flash) and it is recommended for learning, excluding the patient’s faces and name/other identification (ID no. on the monitors).

- Read our books and look at videos/DVDs but you are not allowed to take them out of the OR. Place the books back to shelves after you use them.

- We have lockers for valuables for visitors for daily use; do not take the key with you when you leave the hospital (you will also find lab coats and white scrubs in the locker).

- Please, do not keep the lab coat (doctor’s coat) on while in the OR. Please do not block the way to the drawers and closets for supplies inside the OR (usually lateral or posterior to the anesthesia machine/ventilator).

- Fooling around during the surgery is not allowed, you are here to see the surgery.

- In general, visitors are welcome to the OR also during nights and weekends. If one wants to use some technical device (microscope, videos etc.), ask the staff for assistance.

- We usually ask one of the visitor to scrub to have memory photos during visit.

- Our instructions for hand disinfection to scrub will be given by the scrub nurses. Always apply antiseptic gel regularly in your hands when you arrive and leave the OR.

- No rings, bracelets or big earrings and all hair should be covered.

- The neurosurgeon shaves only minimally the hair, disinfects the wound before marking it and then the scrub nurse drapes the patient. Positioning and closing the wound of the patient is one of the most important parts of the operation and is performed by the operating neurosurgeon and a technician.
• Please ask questions only after emergent situations have calmed down – we enjoy discussions of the approaches and surgeries afterwards, not necessarily during the surgery.

• Radiology meeting is held every week day at 8:30 AM at the X-ray Department (ward rounds every week day 7:45-8:30 for the staff). Nowadays, there are too many visitors to join at the same time!

• We have a scientific meeting (Grand Rounds) every Friday 8:00-9:00 and you are welcome except for administrative meetings (often the slides are in English).

• You may look at your emails wireless in your own laptop in the OR conference room.

• Please note that the OR conference room is occasionally occupied for lecturing and OR product marketing (typically between 12.00–15.00 on Wednesdays).

• There is possibility for coffee and tea making in the OR conference room. Please, bring your own coffee and tea. There is also a refrigerator to store your snacks.

• When visiting for a shorter period, do not ask the fellows, nurses or anybody else to run errands for you (taking copies etc.) but do it yourself. Don’t misuse the people, humble behaviour is preferred.

• Sexual harassment is against the law in Finland, and nurses are advised to inform higher authorities if such action is noticed.

• Visitors are encouraged to visit all OR’s during their stay, but notice if it is an infectious-operation implant OT where traffic is not allowed.

• Diner is open Monday-Friday 10.45-15.00, Saturday-Sunday 12.00-14.00. They accept cash and credit cards to buy meal tickets. Breakfast also available between 7.00-10.00

• Video copies are given for free, bring your own hard drive with capacity 500 GB.

We are sure that you will see a huge number of cases during your visit and learn new things that may change your thinking for the rest of your career. (No one can cross the river twice)

“Helsinki Microneurosurgery – basics and tricks” can be found on the internet for free and strongly recommended to be studied beforehand.

WELCOME!

Mika Niemelä MD PhD
Professor and Chairman
Department of Neurosurgery
Helsinki University Central Hospital (HUCH)