

Prof. Thoralf Sundt: not just the error prevention, but also error management

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The 96th American Association for Thoracic Surgery (AATS) Annual Meeting was held grandly in the Baltimore Convention Center, USA from May 14th–18th, 2016. During the annual meeting, many new ideas and technologies were shared. This time, the Editorial Office of *Journal of Visualized Surgery (JOVS)* was honored to invite Prof. Thoralf Sundt (*Figure 1*), from Massachusetts General Hospital, to have an interview with us.

In the interview, based on his previous lecture on “Value and Limitations of Check Lists and Error Management in Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery”, Prof. Sundt told us his idea on the check lists—checklist is useful in error prevention but not helpful in capture and recovery once the error occur, thus, not just error prevention is important, but also error management. He also emphasized the importance of communication in the teamwork.

Speaking of where the cardiac field going in the next 5 to 10 years, Prof. Sundt thought it continues to be the remarkable advance of technology.

When mentioning about “what’s the most important thing you tell patients when they come to see you”, Prof. Sundt directly told us his answer—engaging into your own care, involve and take responsibility of it!

At the end of the interview, Prof. Sundt also shared with us his reason to be a cardiac surgeon and as well gave our young generation advice to go forward (*Figure 2*).

Interview questions

- On 14th, you have shared an excellent lecture on “Value and Limitations of Check Lists and Error Management in Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery”. Here would you like to share with us your ideas on it? What’s the value and limitations of check lists in cardiovascular surgery?
- In Dr. Gibbons’ speech, he has mentioned about the potential advance in the next decade. Here would you tell us your idea about where do you see your field going in the next 5 to 10 years?



Figure 1 Picture with Prof. Thoralf Sundt.



Figure 2 Interview with Prof. Thoralf Sundt (1).

Available online: <http://www.asvide.com/articles/1000>

- What is the most important thing you tell patients when they come to see you?
- With so many fields in the medical world, what encourage you to be a cardiac surgeon?
- As an experience cardiac surgeon, what would be your advice to our young generation?

Expert introduction

Thoralf Sundt, MD, is the Churchill Professor of Surgery, chief of the Division of Cardiac Surgery and director of the

Corrigan Minehan Heart Center.

Prof. Sundt's clinical focus has been on surgery for the correction of acquired cardiovascular conditions in adults. He is an internationally recognized thought-leader on thoracic aortic aneurysms and other aortic diseases, having written and lectured extensively on the subject. He is also widely recognized as an expert in reparative procedures for vascular heart conditions, including mitral regurgitation and aortic valve regurgitation. He has also contributed to the literature on the optimal use of arterial conduits to improve the long-term durability of coronary bypass procedures.

His research interests have ranged from organ transplantation to the genetics and genomics of bicuspid aortic valve disease. He has received funding by the National Institutes of Health, the AATS and The Mayo Foundation for this work. Most recently, he collaborated with investigators in the disciplines of human factors and systems engineering to improve the safety and efficiency of healthcare delivery. On a national level, he was the first chair of the Workforce on Patient Safety for the Society of Thoracic Surgeons. He is actively collaborating with members of the Mass General Physician Organization in the development of tools to enhance patient centered and shared decision-making.

He has served in numerous executive roles, including

surgical director for cardiac transplantation at Washington University in St. Louis, surgical director of the Thoracic Aortic and Marfan Clinic at the Mayo Clinic and vice-chair of the Department of Surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester. Prof. Sundt is a member of numerous medical and surgical societies and is the vice president of the AATS, the most prestigious academic cardiothoracic surgical organization in the world.

Acknowledgements

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Footnote

Conflicts of Interest: The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

References

1. Gao S. Interview with Prof. Thoralf Sundt. *Asvide* 2016;3:241. Available online: <http://www.asvide.com/articles/1000>

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