

Interview with Prof. Ara Vaporciyan: advocating multidisciplinary collaboration and optimizing the management of complications

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Expert's introduction

Ara Vaporciyan (*Figure 1*) is the tenured professor of surgery and chairman of the department of thoracic and cardiovascular surgery at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas.

Prof. Vaporciyan has maintained an active role in all areas of thoracic surgical oncology. His research interests now involve the role of simulation in education, faculty development, and the integration of novel online teaching techniques in cardiothoracic surgery. His efforts have resulted in the first online learning platform that currently is the national cardiothoracic surgical curriculum for all North American Trainees.

Editor's note

The 5th Congress of Oriental Thoracic Surgery was held in Shanghai from 8th to 9th September 2018. For the first time, the Shanghai Medical Association co-hosted the congress with the Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS), the European Society of Thoracic Surgeons (ESTS), and the European Association for Cardio-Thoracic Surgery (EACTS). There were more than 30 representatives of thoracic surgeons from Europe and the United States and nearly 1,000 experts and scholars from China participating in the congress. They shared and discussed the hot topics of thoracic surgery, which promoted the international exchange and further development of Chinese thoracic surgery. During the conference, the editorial office of *Shanghai Chest* had the great honor to do an interview with Prof. Ara Vaporciyan (*Figure 2*). Prof. Vaporciyan shared his opinions on the management of complications with our readers. Moreover, he talked about his online learning platform for cardiothoracic surgery and gave suggestions for young thoracic surgeons.

For more details, please check the following interview video (*Figure 3*).



Figure 1 Prof. Ara Vaporciyan.

Interview

SHC: *I know that you have been focusing on the integration of novel online teaching techniques in cardiothoracic surgery. Could you please talk about the current progress of this project?*

Prof. Vaporciyan: Two years ago, we launched an online learning platform for all cardiothoracic surgical trainees. It included curated materials taken from textbooks, journal articles, videos, case reports, *et al.*, which were presented to the trainees by organized topics. These topics are also linked to a question bank allows the trainees to practice taking questions on the materials. In addition, there are standardized quizzes covering similar groups of topics (organized into “courses”) which allow the trainees to compare their progress to all the other trainees in the country. This way they can assess where their gaps are in their knowledge and focus their attention on those gaps.



Figure 2 Photo with Prof. Ara Vaporciyan.



Figure 3 Interview with Prof. Ara Vaporciyan: advocating multidisciplinary collaboration and optimizing the management of complications (1).

Available online: <http://www.asvide.com/article/view/27676>

SHC: *What do you think about the current management of complications?*

Prof. Vaporciyan: I think that the overall management of complications is very institutionally based. There is a significant room for more generalized research on the management of complications, but most research related to the subject was confined to a single institution and sometimes even to a single surgeon. In my opinion, if we really want to make progress in optimizing the management of complications, we should advocate multidisciplinary collaboration and spend more time jointly focusing on how can we improve outcomes for patients.

SHC: *As a thoracic surgeon, what is the biggest challenge you have encountered? How did you overcome it?*

Prof. Vaporciyan: I would say that saying “no” has been

the biggest career challenge for me. I am offered many opportunities and there are many areas where I could focus my attention. When I was young, I would jump at every opportunity that was presented to me. As I got older, I realized that I cannot possibly be accomplished at everything, I needed to be more focused. Thinking about where I want to spend my time is probably the most important thing I learned. It took me 10 years, and I am still not perfect, but focusing my attention rather than saying yes to everything has been very rewarding.

SHC: *Would you like to give some advice to young thoracic surgeons on how to develop their academic career?*

Prof. Vaporciyan: In my view, they really should think more broadly about what is most important to them. Many times young surgeons believe that the only version of a successful career is the few examples they have seen in their training. However, there are many versions of successful academic careers. Hence, I think young surgeons can spend more time thinking about what they really want to do and discuss options with many different mentors in order to develop their own successful career.

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1. Gao L. Interview with Prof. Ara Vaporciyan: advocating

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