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Successful in a male domain

Cardiac surgeon Dr. Ezin Deniz has been awarded the Georg Wilhelm Rodewald Prize.

“You should work with passion and enjoy your profession,” says Dr. Ezin Deniz. She speaks with conviction, because she has found her dream job. The 38-year-old is a cardiac surgeon and works in the Aortic Surgery team at the Department of Cardiothoracic, Transplantation and Vascular Surgery at Hannover Medical School (MHH). Dr. Deniz was awarded this year's Georg Wilhelm Rodewald Prize for her outstanding work in the field of thoracic aortic surgery. The award from the German Society for Thoracic, Cardiac and Vascular Surgery is endowed with 2,000 euros.

Many emergencies

The aorta, the main artery, is Dr. Deniz's main area of interest. It supplies the entire body with oxygen-rich blood via branching vessels. Diseases of the aorta are usually complex and operations are often emergencies, for example when a patient is admitted with a ruptured aneurysm. An aneurysm is a pathological bulge in the aorta. “If it tears between the layers of the wall, everything has to happen very quickly because it can be very dangerous,” explains Dr. Deniz. “The whole team then has to work at the push of a button. Our actions are vital,” she emphasizes. Highly concentrated from zero to one hundred - that's what the surgeon likes. The aortic surgery team treats around 25 to 30 emergencies every year. The scheduled operations are much quieter. In the area of the aorta, there are around two to three per week. “In surgery, you can help in a short space of time and see the results of your work immediately. That's what I like about my job,” says Dr. Deniz. But she is not only at the operating table. She also works in the aortic surgery outpatient clinic, where she examines and advises new patients and follows up on patients who have already had surgery.


Innovative surgical method

Dr Deniz specializes in minimally invasive surgical methods for the thoracic aorta. “Thoracic” refers to the part of the aorta that runs in the chest cavity. Minimally invasive surgical methods are also the subject of her work, which was awarded the Georg Wilhelm Rode Prize. In it, the cardiac surgeon deals with the question of whether the minimally invasive replacement of the ascending aorta with a prosthesis can also be extended to the aortic arch. This procedure is considered very challenging, as three arteries spring from the aortic arch, which supply the brain with oxygen as well as the arms. “We wanted to find out whether the results of the minimally invasive surgical methods differ for the ascending part and for the aortic arch,” explains Dr. Deniz. The result is good news for patients. “Minimally invasive procedures can achieve just as good results for the aortic arch as for the ascending part of the aorta. There are neither more strokes nor more bleeding afterwards. And long-term survival is also the same,” says Dr. Deniz. The fact that the aortic arch can be treated with a minimally invasive prosthesis is a great advantage for those affected. This is because minimally invasive procedures generally result in fewer complications and the length of stay in hospital is also shorter.

Support from the bosses

Dr. Deniz is the only woman in her team who performs surgery. In the entire Department of Cardiac, Thoracic, Transplantation and Vascular Surgery, which has more than 40 doctors, she has at least three female colleagues who operate. Surgery, especially cardiac surgery, is still a male domain. Until a few years ago, there was not a single female head of cardiac surgery in Germany. "But the picture is changing," says Dr. Deniz. There are now significantly more women than men studying medicine in Germany. And surgery is also slowly becoming more female. Dr. Deniz completed her medical studies at the MHH and decided to specialize in cardiac surgery during her subsequent internship year. She completed her specialist training in 2023. "I am very lucky that both our clinic director and my department head support women," explains the cardiac surgeon. In Professor Dr. Aron-Frederik Popov's team, she can get the most out of herself clinically and scientifically. This also includes scientific publications such as the award-winning work.

Passion and joy



Dr. Deniz would like to continue in this vein. Then, she hopes, she will soon be able to submit her habilitation. "My job is very important to me," she emphasizes, "I do my work with passion and joy. This often compensates for the stress and overload that exists almost everywhere in medicine." Outside of the clinic, Dr. Deniz finds balance and variety in sport and with her family. "I don't have any children of my own, but I do have five siblings and numerous nieces and nephews." Regardless of whether she has children and a family of her own or not, Dr. Deniz believes that all female surgeons should have the opportunity to realize their professional potential.

For more information, please contact Dr. Ezin Deniz, deniz.ezin@mh-hannover.de.



Dr. Ezin Deniz surrounded by her mostly male colleagues.
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Dream job found: Dr. Ezin Deniz.
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