

Professor Rui Fernandes: we should make patients live better lives rather than just longer lives

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Editor's note

During December 21–22, the OMHN 2019 was held successfully in Shanghai, China, aiming to lead polymerization, joint development, promote oral and maxillofacial—MDT treatment of head and neck cancer. During this forum, we are glad to interview Prof. Rui Fernandes to share his view on the management of lip cancer.

Introduction (Figure 1)

Rui Fernandes, DMD, MD, FACS, Associate Professor, Chief of Head Neck Surgery, Associate Chair, Department of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery, Division of Surgical Oncology, Department of Surgery, University of Florida College of Medicine, USA.

Prof. Rui Fernandes earned his medical degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and completed his dental education at Boston University. After receiving specialty training in oral and maxillofacial surgery at the University of Alabama, he completed a fellowship in Head and Neck oncology and microvascular reconstructive surgery at the University of Maryland. Prof. Rui Fernandes joined the faculty of the University of Florida College of Medicine – Jacksonville in May of 2005.

In 2010, Prof. Rui Fernandes was named Chief of the Head and Neck Service at the UF Jacksonville campus. He maintains an active clinical practice and serves as the program director for the microvascular reconstructive surgery fellowship.

Prof. Rui Fernandes is also a fellow of the American Association of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons, American College of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons, the American Head and Neck Society, the American Society of Clinical Oncology and is a founding fellow of the International Academy of Oral Oncology.

Prof. Rui Fernandes has authored over 100 manuscripts and book chapters and has delivered numerous lectures



Figure 1 Prof. Rui Fernandes.

both nationally and internationally. Serves as the chairman of education committee for the International Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, in this capacity, he organizes and oversees educational programs for the association.

Interview (Video 1)

FOMM: Prof. Fernandes, could you briefly introduce the main points of your speech titled “Management of Lip Cancer: Resection and Reconstruction” which you will deliver on Dec 22 to the experts who are not on site?

Prof. Rui Fernandes: As you said, my lecture on lip cancer will cover not the resection of the tumor out but also the reconstruction. The trickiest part about lip reconstruction is to make the patient look like as if they didn't have surgery. Because we use the lips when speaking

and eating it is critical to reconstruct it in the best possible manner, first from a functional standpoint but also from an esthetic standpoint. Hopefully I'll share my experiences on reconstruction of lip defects with the colleagues.

FOMM: *Based on your profound research experience, what interests you most in the research of Head and Neck Surgery? What sort of ongoing projects do you have in this area?*

Prof. Rui Fernandes: Well, our department focuses on reconstruction, particularly microvascular surgery but also in ablative surgery, we put particular emphasis on outcomes research. Moreover, we are looking for ways to save lives of our patient not only in survival but also in restoration of their quality of life. We have a plethora of ongoing research projects involving many residents and we collaborate with multiple institutions seeking better solutions for our patients.

FOMM: *Could you please share with us the biggest challenge you have encountered in your career? How do you overcome it?*

Prof. Rui Fernandes: From a career standpoint, the challenge has always been building the department, specifically looking at the “head and neck component” of the department. To meet the challenges and overcome it, you must remember that you cannot do it by yourself and that you have to collaborate with colleagues and build consensus. We have strived to create an environment whereby we learn from others who are doing things well and also learn from their mistakes and try not to do those mistakes ourselves. Collaboration is the key to build a successful department.

FOMM: *As we know, you are playing the leading role in the Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery. In your opinion, what are the qualities that every outstanding surgeon should have?*

Prof. Rui Fernandes: First and foremost, you have to be well trained. Your patients deserve the best possible treatment. Second, you have to be affable, meaning that you can get along well with patients and colleagues. Third, is to be available, you have to be around when people need you; both colleagues and patients. Those three ingredients are an old adage of what is needed to be an excellent surgeon.

FOMM: *What do you think which is the best piece of advice anyone ever gave you in your career, professional or personal?*

Prof. Rui Fernandes: I've been very fortunate to have lots of mentors both from a professional as well as from a personal standpoint. They gave me many good advises over the years, so much so that it's difficult to isolate the best one. If I have to pick a single one, I would say the simplest is “be yourself”.

FOMM: *If you are willing to, please list three things that few people know about you.*

Prof. Rui Fernandes: Number one: very few people know about that I'm from a very small country named Cape Verde Islands which is on the west coast of Africa. Number two, few people know that I like soccer. Number three, I am interested in cooking but I am not a good cook.

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