

USER REPORT | ON THE ROAD
WITH THE EP-TRACER PORTABLE

IMMEDIATE USE AND FLEXIBLE HANDLING

Dr. Marc Zimmermann and his humanitarian
project in Georgia



EP-TRACER Portable

As a member of the advisory board of the Swiss foundation “Fondation Cœur de la Tour”, Dr. Marc Zimmermann is no stranger to humanitarian projects. Founded in 1984, the aim of the foundation is the reduction of the rapid increase in cardiovascular diseases in developing countries. So far projects have been supported in Cameroon, Nepal and Sarajevo.

Under his direction, medical development projects, such as one running since 2004 at the Central Hospital of Yaoundé in Cameroon, are carried out with the focus of training of doctors in cardiology. Since 2015, he is now also performing missions in Tbilisi, Georgia. His col-

league, Dr. Vladimir Velebit, enthusiastically started a project there in 2004 in cardiovascular surgery, which Dr. Zimmermann implemented with his expertise as an electrophysiologist.

Largely unknown technology

Indeed, much has improved in the Georgian health system since 2008, through

the privatization of hospitals. Still, much remains to be done: “In the history of the country until now, about half the number of ablations have been performed that would be performed in Switzerland in a single year”, states the electrophysiologist.

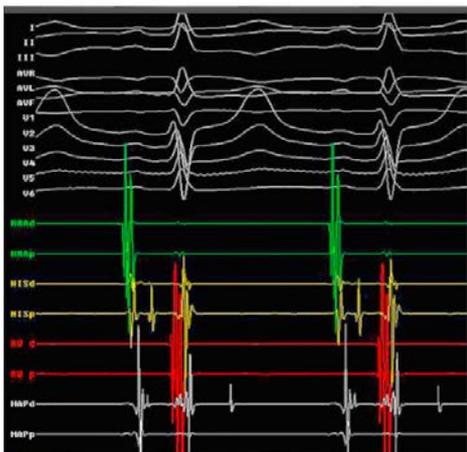
Of the many new or renovated hospitals in Tbilisi and the surrounding area,

only ten were private, of which just seven are equipped for electrophysiology. Nevertheless five of those seven carry out only an average of approx. 15 to 40 ablations per year. “The technology is largely unknown and the methods simply not established yet”, according to Dr. Zimmermann.

A further hurdle: bureaucracy. Billing the cost of treatment represents a challenge. Depending on the condition and age of the patient, they must check with the state health department whether the patient can be treated or whether coverage of 70% of the costs is possible. The patient must then cover the remaining 30%, a fact that blocks access to treatment for many patients. The unemployment rate in Georgia, and especially in Tbilisi, is staggeringly high, Zimmermann reports.

The value of quick success

In general, prevention is a weak point in the Georgian health system and the information provided, for example, in explaining the danger of recurrence in the case of heart attacks, is rudimentary. “Since many diseases may require re-



EP signal



Laptop-based EP-TRACER Portable with connection to larger monitor

“The Portable allowed for immediate use and flexible handling. Also the predictable financial commitment made it the right choice for us.”

Dr. Marc Zimmermann

peated treatment, a long-term, sustained recovery is often very difficult to achieve”, regrets Dr. Zimmermann. Because of this, the success rate of the initial treatment becomes even more important.

The project on the Open Heart Hospital in Tbilisi

A private investor completely renovated the Open Heart Hospital, in which the project is running, and it equipped it with a modern cardiology department. It was opened in June 2015. Already in April of this year, Marc Zimmermann travelled to Tbilisi in order to inspect the department and review the development plan for the project.

Manageable financial commitment

Since the project is still in its infancy, he wanted at this time that the Fondation du Cœur de la Tour first see how it starts and develops. The advisory board avoided coming in with a large investment, due to lack of previous experience demonstrating the responsible investment of large sums of money. This necessitated the requirement for a mobile, flexible system and thus, in 2015 the EP-TRACER Portable had been acquired. The EP-specialist summarizes his decision: “The Portable allowed for immediate use and flexible handling. Also the predictable financial commitment made it the right choice for us”.

The project is proceeding right on track. Dr. Zimmermann is now spending one week every two months in Tbilisi.



Dr. Zimmermann in conversation with Lionel Agnoletti

“The signals themselves are really very good! And the device itself is so easy to install: laptop, connect monitor – finished in 10 minutes.”

Dr. Marc Zimmermann

He is accompanied by Lionel Agnoletti, a technician that also has a nursing training. “We have already performed three missions, with great success. The first visit was in September 2015, then the second in December and in February 2016 the third. The next trip is already planned for the beginning of July!” he says.

On site is a young, unexperienced electrophysiologist, which the team continuously trains during their missions. They plan that, one day, he will lead the project independently.

Fast set-up

In the cathlab, the EP-TRACER Portable is connected to a big monitor, allowing a larger display for the signals. “The signals themselves are really very good! And the device itself is so easy to install: laptop, connect monitor – finished in 10 minutes”, is how the he doctor describes the simple system design.

Also in complex cases no problem

Even the most complex cases present no barrier for Dr. Zimmermann and the EP-TRACER Portable. He describes the

case of a 14 year old boy, who at the time suffered from three different arrhythmia substrates. In September 2015, Dr. Zimmermann treated him for the first time. After relapse, a re-treatment followed in December.

Since then he is

going well. “The case was so challenging and complex that the Powerpoint presentation that I have prepared to show to colleagues takes up a full 52 pages”, he insists.

For now the project is limited to Tbilisi, however “...the device may be used at any time somewhere else, in addition to every two to three months in Tbilisi. Why not in Nepal or Cameroon or elsewhere?” Marc Zimmermann sums up happily.



Training of the young colleague in Tbilisi

The project in Tbilisi is supported by the "Fondation Frédéric et Jean Maurice", Geneva. The foundation is dedicated to promoting access to adequate medical treatment, especially in developing countries.

→ BIO



**Dr. Marc-Etienne
Zimmermann**

Dr. Marc-Etienne Zimmermann has a long professional background in cardiology.

He developed invasive clinical electrophysiology at the University Hospital of Geneva. His main interests focused on invasive electrophysiology and catheter ablation, electrocardiography and signal-averaging techniques, pacing and implantable defibrillation.

Since 1997, he developed clinical electrophysiology and radiofrequency catheter ablation at the Hôpital de la Tour, Meyrin, Switzerland, a private hospital mainly involved in the treatment of cardiovascular diseases. Zimmermann is Head of the Clinical Electrophysiology.

Apart from more than 100 publications in the field of arrhythmias, he gave several hundreds of talks in that domain and has been responsible for teaching electrocardiography at the medical school of the University Hospital of Geneva until 2014 (privat docent from the medical school of the University of Geneva).

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