

The concept of the “Living Textbook of Hand Surgery”

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Hand surgery is based on highly specialized surgical education, research and discussions. In some fields diagnostic and therapeutic aspects are changing rather fast. Conventional textbooks therefore have to be revised after some years and to be published again. They are quite expensive and difficult to get at many parts of the world.

On the other hand we have a cheap and well-working platform, which is available nearly everywhere worldwide – the Internet. This platform should – in the idea of OPEN ACCESS – not be only another plain for conventional publishing. It implies the chance for a free textbook combined with many graphs, photos and video. Everybody with internet access has the possibility to use this book without any restrictions and to copy, reuse, modify and spread the material in the sense of OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES by addressing the author and the source.

The Living Textbook of Hand Surgery is a comprehensive open access textbook on hand surgery in English language. The aim is to establish a cite-worthy standard work. It includes principles and basics, clinical aspects and all information about diagnostic and treatment. The field of rehabilitation is also extensively covered. Many chapters, where suitable, contain a part with “author’s preferred method”. Videos illustrate surgical techniques and skills and can be reached in a “short-track click” at the register to surgical techniques.

It is clearly a community project. However, it is not meant to be a “Wikipedia for Hand Surgery”. All contents pass a peer review process, an Editorial board recruits authors from their network, editorial quality is assured by copy-editing with editorial professionals. All hand surgeons in the team – editors, authors, reviewers – work complimentary. For editorial and technical work, most of the costs are covered by ZB MED – Leibniz Information Centre for Life Sciences. For the remaining costs a non-profit association of German hand surgeons was founded under the title Handchirurgie Weltweit e.V.

All chapters in the Living Handbook of Hand Surgery are regularly updated by the authors after defined validity periods. However, each previous version will keep accessible in an archive. Thus, a citation will always lead exactly to the version it refers to, while a note will inform the reader that a more recent version exists. For permanent reference, each chapter and each version has a so-called Digital Object Identifier (DOI).

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In future we hope to establish a portal not only for knowledge and education in Hand Surgery but to create a platform for communication between scientists and surgeons, for open data and educational material in the sense of OER.



Learn more about:



“Knowledge belongs to whoever produces it, but knowledge does not belong to anyone exclusively.”

Rainer Kuhlen

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