



Letter to the Editor

Reply to Luca Boeri and Emanuele Montanari's Letter to the Editor re: Guido Giusti, Silvia Proietti, Moises E. Rodríguez-Socarrás, et al. Simultaneous Bilateral Endoscopic Surgery (SBES) for Patients with Bilateral Upper Tract Urolithiasis: Technique and Outcomes. *Eur Urol* 2018;74:810–5

The Concise Oxford Thesaurus defines a pilot project or study as an “experimental, exploratory, test, preliminary, trial or try out” investigation [1]. The purpose of a pilot study is to perform a “. . . test of the methods and procedures to be used on a larger scale” if the pilot study demonstrates that the methods and procedures work [2]. We appreciate the comments by Boeri and Montanari and their compliments regarding our study. We wish to respond to their letter by stating that we agree with their premise: ours is indeed a pilot study, a small-scale study performed with the intent of demonstrating feasibility so that the simultaneous bilateral endoscopic surgery (SBES) technique can be understood by others. By reporting on our initial series of 27 patients [3], we showed that in this selected group, SBES was successfully performed and potentially has significant benefits. We fully understand their comments: patients were not randomized, stone volumes were not reported, and the analyses for outcomes and costs, while relevant to the patients in our study, may not be generalizable to all stone formers with bilateral stone disease. We argue that our study achieved its purpose: a pilot study with a high success rate and without significant complication to demonstrate that other centers can consider the SBES technique and that those experienced in SBES could consider expanding their indications for the procedure. Throughout the medical literature, it has been noted that pilot studies are a “fundamental phase in the research process” and a “requisite initial step in exploring a novel intervention or an innovative application of an intervention” [4]; this was our goal and we feel that we have accomplished it with the publication of our manuscript.

We wish to point out that the initial publications for other techniques also involved studies with a similar design to ours. The first series on robotic prostatectomy by Pasticier et al. in 2001 [5], the first series on holmium laser enucleation of the prostate by Fraundorfer and Gilling in 1998 [6], and the first series on laparoscopic nephrectomy by Clayman et al. in 1992 [7] reported on just five, 14, and 16 patients, respectively. From these prior publications it could be concluded that our pilot study of 27 patients is actually quite robust for an initial description of a novel technique. It is our sincere hope that publication of our pilot study will inspire others to consider SBES in the future, including prospective randomized studies that could either support or challenge our conclusions from the first published study on this topic.

Conflicts of interest: Guido Giusti is a consultant for Coloplast, Rocamed, Olympus, Lumenis, Boston Scientific, BD-Bard, Cook Medical, and Quanta System. Silvia Proietti is a consultant for Quanta System. Brian H. Eisner is a consultant for Boston Scientific, Olympus, Kalera Medical, and Sonomotion. Moises E. Rodríguez-Socarrás has nothing to disclose.

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