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The Development of the Stent in Balloon Angioplasty

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In the first or second year of his medical residency training in the US in 1978, Palmaz went to an early meeting of the Society of Cardiovascular Intervention and Radiology in New Orleans. The keynote speaker was a young professor from Germany, Andreas Grunzig, who was coming to the states to report on his early experience with balloon angioplasty. Grunzig was charasmatic and intelligent, and explained balloon angioplasty so clearly--benefits and potential risks--that when he came to the reasons for failure, Palmaz immediately began to think of solutions to the problem. Palmaz describes the problem: early failures showed that balloon angioplasty was inconsistent. Palmaz describes how he began to work on a solution--he first wrote down his idea. He described his idea to his chairman on the way to the airport, and was encouraged to write it up to put his thoughts down on paper.

Transcript

Actually, the first, second year of my residency training in the States, I went to one of the early meetings of the Society of Cardiovascular Intervention and Radiology in New Orleans, 1978, and the keynote speaker was this young professor from Germany, Andreas Grunzig, who was coming to the States to report on his early experience with balloon angioplasty. So I was very lucky in being in the audience of about... much smaller than this one here. And Grunzig was very charismatic and clearly an intelligent individual. He explained the early experience about balloon angioplasty so clearly and in such lucid description of the benefits and potential risks that when he came out to the reasons for failure, elicited in my mind--it could've elicited in anybody else's mind, I believe--the potential of a solution. What were those early failures? I mean, what did you hear Grunzig say that told you balloon angioplasty alone wasn't going to work, that something like a stent was needed? He had a very graphic way to describe it. He said, "Balloon angioplasty works sometimes, and sometimes it doesn't." There that would hold all that material back and keep the vessel open. So talk about your early efforts to develop the stent, because as I understand it began with a trip to Radio Shack. Yeah. Actually it began more like by writing down my idea on a piece of paper.

In fact, on the way to the airport from that meeting, my chairman, who was always lecturing me about what's the way to do things better, told me--I told him about this early idea and he said, "Write it up." Just write them on the graph on this. Right. And he said, "No, it won't be a paper of course," he said, "but it will give you the habit of putting down in writing what is in your mind."