Foreword

During the last decade, cardiovascular surgery and interventional cardiology have witnessed a great technological progress, especially in the field of structural valve disease. This progress led to a dramatic increase of percutaneous valve interventions and the accompanying clinical trials have led to changes in the guidelines for a broad range of cardiovascular diseases.

One of the most evident examples of this rapid technological improvement which has had a high impact on clinical practice is the treatment of severe aortic stenosis using transcatheter aortic valve implantation. While it was limited to patients at extremely high risk for surgical aortic valve replacement during the early era, the indication was rapidly broadened towards lower risk patients, given the excellent outcomes in intermediate and low risk. The following chapters describe the key factors facilitating the successful journey of interventional heart valve therapy in a very appealing way.

Alongside with the rapid adoption of interventional treatment modalities for a broad variety of indications comes a demand for new technical skills for the “modern cardiovascular surgeon”.

Furthermore, a deep knowledge of imaging technology for procedural planning and guidance to minimize the procedure related challenges and a thorough and individual risk assessment are essential to select and execute the best therapy for each patient. In this context, the importance of a collaborating heart team in specialized centers, with an interdisciplinary intellectual exchange is a cornerstone of success. A high level of expertise of specialties working together, ensures that all available treatment options can be provided without the price of an inferior quality. These aspects are pointed out in several of the following chapters, regardless of the underlying disease or specific treatment modality.

As a specialist, you may be mainly focused on a specific topic, but acknowledging the fact that lateral thinking can be impressively enriching, it will be rewarding to spend some time reading all of the following chapters.