

History

The saga of development of plastic surgery at K. G.'s Medical University

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The postgraduate Department of Plastic Surgery at King George's Medical University is one of the oldest and foremost departments in the country. The development of Plastic Surgery at this institution has been the guide for the development of plastic surgery services in this part of the country. This was due to the persistent efforts of Dr. R. N. Sharma, the founder of this department. He was a visionary and worked hard to create, develop and nurture this department [Figure 1].

It was in the year 1949, the Central Government decided to develop specialty services in the country. Dr. R. N. Sharma while working as Lecturer in General Surgery at K G's Medical College, Lucknow volunteered to undertake training in Plastic Surgery. He was awarded a scholarship for training in Plastic Surgery in England. He was placed at Oxford under the tutelage of Prof. T. P. Kilner and Mr. Eric Peet. After spending three years learning the art and craft of Plastic surgery he returned in 1953 to lay the nidus for Plastic Surgery at this university, which at that time was called as King George's Medical College and was part of the Lucknow University. After his return from U. K. he devoted his time exclusively to the practice of Plastic Surgery.

In the year 1962, the State Government sanctioned a unit of Plastic Surgery with 25 beds, with a post of Professor in Plastic Surgery and posts of residents. Till this time, the operating rooms and resources were shared with General Surgery. In 1966, the State Government of Uttar Pradesh sanctioned funds for a separate operation theatre complex along with the posts

of Lecturer, technicians and a store keeper. In 1966, permission was granted to start a super speciality course of two year duration. It was then called as M. S. in Plastic Surgery. Dr. M. H. Khan has the privilege of being the first trainee. Dr. Khan later moved to J. N. Medical College at Aligarh Muslim University and started the Plastic Surgery unit and M.Ch program at his place. In 1967 Dr R N Sharma represented India, as the national delegate at the International conference at Rome and APSI joined the International federation. In the same year (1967) the Central Government once again provided finances for expansion. Addition of manpower and facilities took place in 1968. Posts of Lecturer in Anaesthesia for the department were sanctioned along with more posts of residents and technicians.

1971 marked another land mark year for the department with the Central Government providing additional funds for Central Air-conditioning, operating theatres and upgrading the department as a postgraduate department of Plastic Surgery. Posts of Lecturer cum Dental Liaison Officer and Registrar in Plastic Surgery were created, for which appointments were made in 1972 and 1973 respectively.

Dr. Ramesh Chandra, who was working as Lecturer in General Surgery and had developed an interest in the speciality, joined the department. He also did his M.S. (Plastic Surgery) from this department. Dr. Ramesh Chandra was promoted as Reader in 1973, following which a post of lecturer fell vacant. Another post of lecturer in Hand Surgery was created. Dr. S.K. Bhatnagar,

who had already done his M. Ch. from Safdarjung Hospital, was appointed to the post and Dr. S. D. Pandey joined as the Lecturer in Hand Surgery. Dr. Pandey had received training in hand surgery under Mr. Guy Pulvertaft. Later, he obtained his M. Ch. training from the department. He concentrated only on Hand Surgery. With four faculty members, the department got a boost and it brought in expansion of services by the energetic team.

The infrastructure of the department developed in tandem with the activities. Foundation for a new block (of 5 floors) was laid in 1974 adjoining the existing complex which was being shared by Neurosurgery and Cardiothoracic surgery. In 1975, two Carl Zeiss Microscopes were imported by the department. In fact, they were the 2nd and 3rd operating microscopes to be imported in the country. By now full fledged physiotherapy unit with a physiotherapist, speech therapy unit with speech therapist, prosthetic labs with prosthetic mechanic and record section were fully functional. Dr. S. K. Singh, MDS was initially looking after the dental work. He moved to the Dental College and subsequently Dr. K. L. Pradhan, MDS was appointed as Lecturer-cum-dental liaison officer. By 1978, the ground floor of the new block was constructed and the offices moved into it in 1979.

Dr. R. N. Sharma retired in 1982 but not before bringing this department on the national and international scene. The department had four admissions for M. Ch. each year and 32 beds, besides the specialised labs mentioned earlier. During this period he visited a number of centres abroad and attended many international conferences. He also ensured that the passing out postgraduates are absorbed at Government jobs in the State and working towards that goal, he was instrumental in creation of jobs in Plastic Surgery in all major colleges and hospitals of U. P. He was the one of the founder member of APSI and had become its president in 1966.

Dr. R. N. Sharma handed over the mantle to Dr. Ramesh Chandra on 30th June, 1982 [Figure 2] to continue the legacy and the unfinished work (as he has quoted in his memoir) [Figure 3]. Prof. R. Chandra remained the Head till June, 2000. During this period, the residency scheme was implemented in the state. The numbers of M. Ch seats were reduced to 3 (It later translated into having 3 residents each year in the department- a total of 9 residents at present.) The Bed strength of the department also went down to 26. During his tenure

the first floor of the new block was constructed. He later became the principal of the College.

Dr. S. K. Bhatnagar had a short stint as head of the department from July 2000 to Oct 2002. During this short span he energetically tried to improve the functioning of the department and it is image. The academic activities got a boost. He believed in earnest dedication and sincere work. He collaborated with various other departments of the college. He initiated low budget, without frills workshops aiming at technology transfer. He pursued the case of releasing funds for creation of 2nd floor to the new complex. He received the prestigious FAMS from National Academy of Medical Sciences.

Dr. Arun Kumar Singh, a M.Ch. trainee of this department joined as faculty in 1986, after a brief stint as lecturer at GSVM Medical College, Kanpur. Dr. S. K. Bhatnagar superannuated in 2002 and relinquished the charge to A. K. Singh. Dr. S. K. Bhatnagar's services were retained by the institution and are continuing. Dr A. K. Singh has pursued the development of the department [Figure 4]. Besides continuing with an academic environment, plastic surgery services were extended for primary reconstruction in emergency. Employee welfare schemes were initiated too. Late Prof R. N. Sharma memorial lecture is being done each year at the foundation of the department. Dr. N. B. Hart in 2003, Dr. Andrew Burd in 2004, Dr. H. S. Asopa in 2005 and Dr. Brian Sommerlad in 2006 delivered the lectures. Workshops aimed at teaching general surgeons and orthopaedic surgeons were initiated. A number of outreach programmes were also started [Figure 5]. Considering the increasing work load, one faculty position and three posts of residents were added to the department. Dr. Rajiv Agrawal who was working in the department as Registrar was appointed assistant Professor in Nov. 2003. The Smile Train Organisation approached the department to extend its services and the department happily collaborated with it [Figure 6]. A noteworthy feature is that none of the consultants is drawing any fiscal benefit and money is utilised for academic purposes and for departmental development. The Bed strength of the department has also been increased with the addition of 8 private rooms in the department itself. During this period Dr. Vijay Kumar joined the department in May 2005 as faculty and is energetically contributing his services. Dr. R. K. Kain worked briefly in the department as a faculty member he has since then joined the Safdarjung Hospital in New Delhi,. Recently, the Government of India has recognised



Figure 1: Dr. R. N. Sharma (The founder of the dept.)



Figure 2: On the occasion of retirement of Dr. R. N. Sharma



Figure 3: Some alumni in front of the president's house during IPRAS congress, New Delhi (1987)

the department as a nodal centre for leprosy reconstructive surgery.

The department has been academically active. It has contributed in a big way to the literature by publishing a huge number of articles in Indian and foreign journals. Many new procedures have been designed. Notable ones



Figure 4: Inauguration of the 2nd floor of the new block (22nd Dec 2003)



Figure 5: Exhibition on burns, being viewed by the governor of Uttar Pradesh, organised as part of NABICON 2004



Figure 6: Patients operated during a camp in 2005 organised for cleft children

are a new flap on lateral thoracic axis (sub scapular flap), Rhomboid flap for urethral fistula, Preputial island flap for urethral defects, sternomastoid osseomyocutaneous flap for midline mandibular defects, Bone plate operation, etc. Some surgical instruments have also been designed in the department, like - instrument for nail bed graft harvesting, instrument for closed fasciotomy,

modification of internal distractor, etc. More than 80 theses have been published by the department. Research is continuing on Clefts, distraction, brachial plexus lesions, microsurgery and Skin Culture, to name a few.

Since its inception as a department, a number of overseas visitors come to the department which included Drs. Hunter, Feieraband, Semple, B. N. Bailey, Baconsfield, Rank, I. T Jackson, Hackenjos, Barton, Munster, Bhangoo, Biemer, Hart, Andrew Burd, Hanumadas, Sommerlad and many others. The department has the singular privilege of hosting the annual conference of the APSI on three occasions in 1967, in 2000 and in 2002. Dr. R. N. Sharma, Dr. Ramesh Chandra and Dr. S. K. Bhatnagar share a number of things in common. They have received the prestigious B. C. Roy award and have been Presidents of APSI.

Currently the department is imparting comprehensive plastic surgery training to the residents. It is a leading centre for craniofacial and hand surgery. Basic research in skin culture is also being undertaken. The contribution of the faculty and residents has been of mutual benefit for themselves and for the department.

As we have close down this saga, two faculty positions are vacant and efforts are on to find suitable candidates for the same. It is the endeavour of the department to impart quality teaching and training to MCh students [we are teaching MBBS, MS (surgery and Orthopaedics) and BDS students as well] and at the same time provide efficient and caring treatment to the populace. We would close by praying to the Almighty to give us the strength and wisdom to do so.