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Kerala Pioneering Pediatric Surgery in India

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Pediatric surgeons of Kerala are very proud to have led the development of superspeciality in any branch of medicine in Kerala and also superspeciality of Pediatric surgery in whole of India. Late Prof. Raman Nair returned in 1954 after training under Dr. Everett Koop in US. Same year, in his far-sighted vision for future development of the speciality, he moved to SATH, Medical College, Trivandrum and started Pediatric surgery as a speciality attached to Paediatrics department; this was the beginning of Pediatric surgery in India. He opted for Pediatric surgery as a full time job and did not do any general surgery work in adults. He was the first full time Pediatric surgeon of India; during the next few years, 2 surgeons, one in Calcutta, Prof. UC Chakraborty and Prof. D Anjaneyulu in Hyderabad started working as full time Pediatric surgeons. In Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai, Pediatric surgery developed much later and then all over the country [1-4].

In UK, Sir Dennis Brown, an Australian surgeon became the first full time Pediatric Surgeon in 1924. In US, W Ladd in 1927 and later R Gross were the 2 full time Pediatric surgeons. In Asia, Japan was a lead country along with Kerala to start Pediatric surgery as independent speciality in 50s. Mario Kasai was the pioneer in this field [5].

Pediatric surgery department in Thiruvananthapuram developed into a fully staffed department and by 1966, it was recognised as one of the best departments in India. It was the first department to obtain an infant ventilator and blood gas analyser in 1970; in 1971, MCh course was started in Pediatric surgery, first superspeciality course in Kerala affiliated to Kerala university.

Prof. George Taliat started Pediatric surgery department in Calicut in 1966 in the Medical College (then housed in Beach hospital); Department had 40 beds allocated to it and obtained 2 operating rooms for its own use by 1970. In 1973 Prof KK Varma took over as HOD of the department as Prof Taliat moved to Trivandrum due to personal reasons. By 1979, department had full staff with 1 Professor, 1 Associate Professor, 1 Assistant Professor and 3 lecturers. MCh course was started in 1980. In 1970, first successful repair of Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia was carried out in a newborn baby in Beach hospital; in 1979 first Esophageal Atresia with fistula survived operative repair on day 3 after birth and she is doing well at 34 years now. In 1979, a tumor protocol for Wilm's Tumor, based partly on WTSG of US was implemented and by 1990 the tumor-free survival

rate had reached more than 80% (much higher than any institution in India at that time). Pediatric Urology clinic was started in 1979, with a research fund from ICMR. By 1988, Pediatric Urology was established as one main area of research and clinical work in addition to Congenital Megacolon, Imperforate Anus and solid tumors; and residents and fellows from all over India including those from Mumbai and Delhi were trained in the department [6-13].

In 1970, in Kottayam Medical college, Pediatric surgery department was started; soon, Alleppey (1978) and Trichur (1986) had the speciality established. By 1986 all Government Medical Colleges in Kerala had fully independent departments; and by 1989, all Pediatric Surgery departments had a Professor heading the department, first speciality to achieve the status in Kerala and India.

In BMH, first Pediatric surgeon was Dr. MI Sreekumaran and subsequently, Drs. KV Lakshmanan, KK Varma, VK Gopi, TP Joseph, PR Babu and Satish Kumar worked in BMH; at present, hospital has a full fledged Pediatric surgery department with 2 full time (Drs TP Joseph and KV Satish Kumar) and 2 visiting consultants (Drs PR Babu and VK Gopi). Department caters to children from age of day 1 to age 19 years and has an excellent neonatal surgical care provided by Neonatal ICU under Dr. N Rajesh. Excellent Anesthesia support is provided by Dr. EK Ramadas and team, which has made it possible to operate babies who weigh only 900 grams and who have gone home well. Pediatric surgery department carries out corrective surgery for most of the congenital malformations; also it does manage Urology problems in babies and children, so also Laparoscopic/Thoracoscopic procedures such as Appendicectomy, Ovarian Cystectomy, Cholecystectomy etc; poly trauma in children is managed by Pediatric surgeons as well as solid tumors and acute abdomen and other acute surgical lesions. Thanks to the vision of Chairman Dr. KG Alexander, BMH can boast of the best Child and Adolescent department in private sector in Kerala.

Future of Pediatric Surgery in BMH: We are yet to enter into areas like EXIT (extra uterine intrapartum surgery), fetal surgery and robotic surgery. These are some of the areas we have to develop in the next decade to reach international levels. Our main disadvantage is lack of medical insurance for babies born with congenital anomalies; our aim is to get this sorted out in the next few years.

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