

HISTORICAL FACTSHEET No 16

Education for Orthopaedic Surgeons

From the time he was appointed Honorary Surgeon to the Baschurch Home, Robert Jones brought other orthopaedic surgeons, often from abroad, to visit the home and gain an insight into Agnes Hunt's methods of treatment. In 1922, after the hospital had moved to its present site, the system of medical care was reorganised. All operations were overseen by Honorary Consultant Surgeons, who visited each week in turn. On-site medical care was provided by a Senior Resident Surgeon and two House Surgeons, junior doctors who were seeking to widen their experience of orthopaedics before moving on to other more senior posts.

The practice of recruiting surgeons from overseas seeking specialist training meant that 'the Orthopaedic' became known all over the world as a centre of orthopaedic care. In the 1920s and 1930s, many resident surgeons came from the former colonial countries of Australia, New Zealand and Canada. After the Second World War, links were forged with many other countries, such as Venezuela, Japan, Hungary and the Lebanon.

Australian orthopaedic surgeon Brian O'Connor was appointed Director of Clinical Studies in 1968. He was responsible for establishing the Institute of Orthopaedics, opened in 1971, as a model for the co-ordination of postgraduate education, research and patient care. Under his leadership, the Institute of Orthopaedics built a reputation for educational courses on many specialist aspects of orthopaedic care, such as hip replacement surgery, arthroscopy, and spinal surgery, attracting delegates from all over the United Kingdom and abroad. It was also the first place in the UK to hold an annual course in 'A.O.' techniques, a system for the internal fixation of fractures, developed in the German-speaking countries of mainland Europe.

In recognition of his educational achievements, Brian O'Connor was appointed the first Professor of Orthopaedics based at Oswestry, when Birmingham University established the Robert Jones Chair of Orthopaedics in 1978. He held this post until his retirement in 1994, when the link with Birmingham came to an end. His successor, Professor James Richardson, established a new link with Keele University, Stoke-on-Trent, which continues to thrive. The Oswestry/ Stoke training programme for orthopaedic surgeons, one of three in the West Midlands, is very highly regarded, and attracts applicants from a wide area. The trainees gain experience at 11 different hospitals, including two over the border in Wales (Wrexham and Bangor).

Sources

1. *Carter, Marie. Healing & hope: 100 years of 'The Orthopaedic'. Oswestry: The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic and District Hospital NHS Trust, 2000*
2. *Orthopaedic Illustrated No 18 1979, p 3*