

Health

Ensuring Greater Access to Surgical Treatment

by Iftikhar A Chowdhury

THE Fourth International Surgical Congress organised by the Society of Surgeons of Bangladesh (SOSB) was inaugurated on December 17, 1993. The three-day Congress was participated by some 500 surgeons, allied professionals and experts from Japan, Pakistan, India, Singapore, United States and Bangladesh.

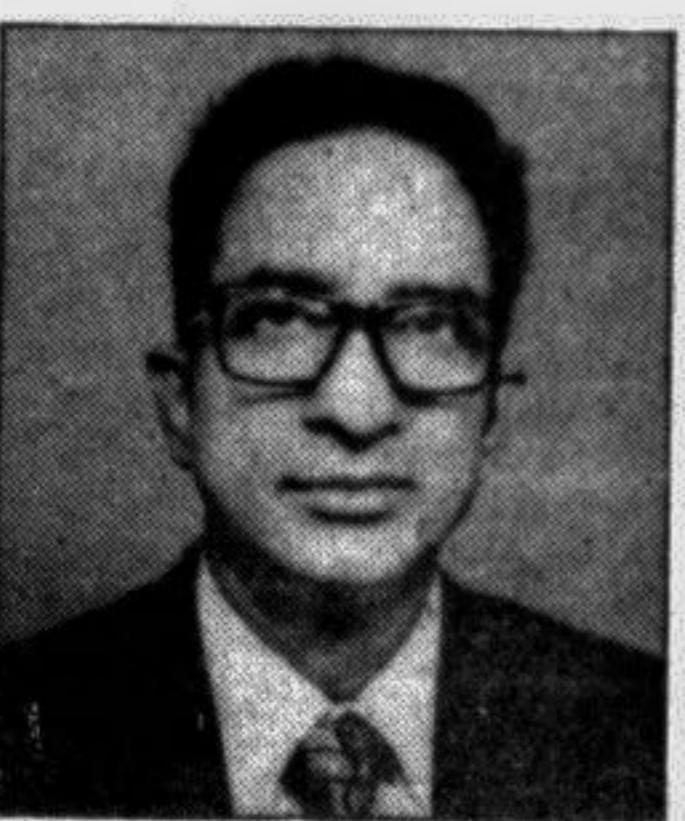
"The society had to go through a lot of ordeals to make this Congress a success or, at least, a near-success," said Dr Kabiruddin Ahmed, President of the Society. The main problem in materialising this programme was to generate a handsome fund. As an international meet like this demanded a heavy sum of money, fund raising became difficult. The main sponsors were the various pharmaceutical companies. Dr. Kabir was candid enough to confess, "To be frank, we couldn't provide to our foreign colleagues the kind of facilities that we usually receive when we go to their country to attend a meet of the similar nature." In their fund raising efforts, the Society earned a substantial amount through membership registration fees. They also collected fund in the form of donations and offered sponsorships. For instance, one pharmaceutical company produced fluids. There was a discussion on Fluid Therapy in Surgery, so that very pharmaceutical company was interested in sponsoring the session as the benefits proved to be mutual. Other than these, the Society received advertisements and in some cases few companies have come forward to sponsor lunch and dinner also.

When asked how will this Congress help improve the standard of surgical treatment in our country Dr. Kabir stressed that, "In any international meet the main objective is one of exchanging views and ideas formed through professional observations and research. In these conferences one projects his or her ideas on a certain issue so that it can be tested, improved, shared and also debated upon. In the process, one professional is enriched by the experience of others, one country is helped by another. It can be said to be a stage where professional ideas are formed. And because our country is lagging behind many other countries in the level of medical advancement, we definitely have a lot to reap from international meets such as these. For instance, prior to this meet we did not have a clear idea about the use of fluid therapy in surgery, but after a long discussion on the subject, now the confusions have been

Many people complain about the current state of surgical treatment available in our country and much of these complaints are not unduly imposed. That time is yet to come when our citizens will not have to opt for surgical treatment abroad and spend huge amount of foreign exchange in the process. Dr. M. Kabiruddin Ahmed and Dr. Shafquat H. Khundkar, the outgoing President and the Secretary General, Society of Surgeons of Bangladesh (SOSB) in an interview with The Daily Star discussed the current state, the problems and prospects of surgical treatment

greatly removed."

There was also a panel of discussions on breast cancer. It was jointly organised by Breast Cancer Study Group and the Society of Surgeons. They have decided to form a recommendation on the basis of the discussion and surgeons in the country will work on this for next couple of years. Then they will feed-back their study results and based on those results, a consensus will be formed on how to treat breast cancer patients in Bangladesh. "Delayed marriage, belated pregnancy and reluctance of breast-feeding have been pointed out as few of



Dr. M. Kabiruddin Ahmed

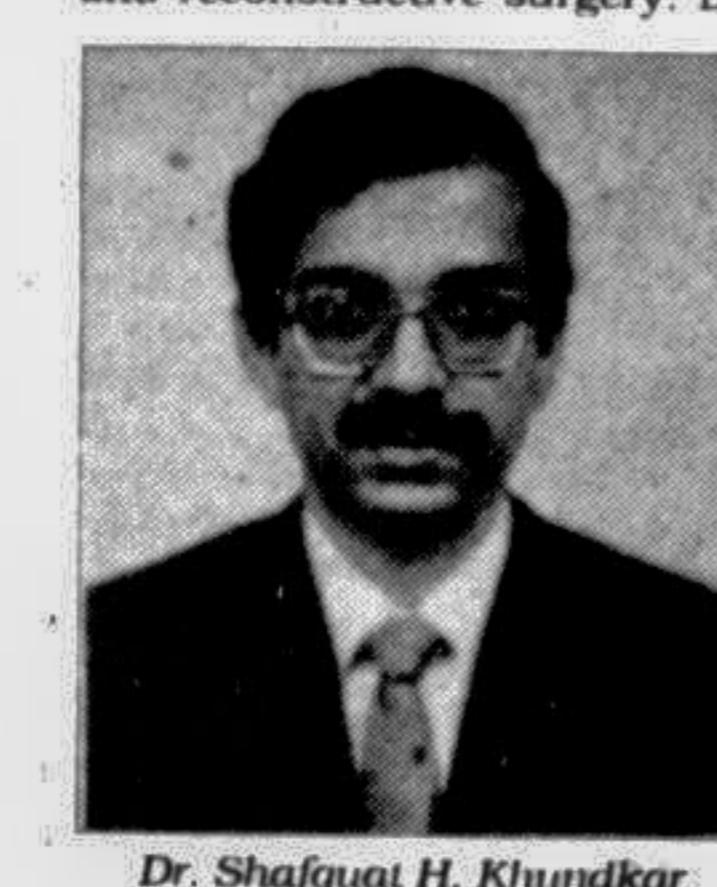
the reasons for breast cancer. But in our country we have young married women with healthy children who have contacted the fatal disease. True also, that here many cases of breast cancer go unreported and therefore, untreated, for the lack of enough female doctors and surgeons. Khaleda Osmani, surgeon from Pakistan, who attended the Congress, stressed that in such cases many women feel shy to go to a male doctor. So there's a vital need for more female surgeons in our country," emphasised Dr. Kabir.

"Actually, the number of general surgeons that we have currently, are fairly capable of taking the load. But we have an acute shortage in sub-speciality. For development in sub-specialty appropriate training and post-creation is very vital," argued Dr. Shafquat. Of late, some posts were created, said the doctor, in pediatric surgery and now young surgeons are quite enthusiastic about it and are opting for those posts.

Dr. Shafquat mentioned that previously general surgeons had to perform in the sub-specialty categories too, mainly for the lack of skilled personnel in the relevant fields. But now there's a distinct division between general surgery and sub-specialty. For instance, new surgical on-

cologists or cancer surgeons have now emerged as a result of post-creation in this field. Now general surgeons too, can shift to sub-specialty if scopes are created. Because our general surgeons are really very skilled. In this Congress, says Dr. Shafquat, they have produced some excellent papers which have again proved their potency.

On reflecting as to how people's confidence can be restored to a home-based surgical treatment, specially in sub-specialties like cardio-vascular surgery, orthopaedic, plastic and reconstructive surgery. Dr



Dr. Shafquat H. Khundkar

Shafquat said, "For this, I believe that media should play a constructive role. In most of the media coverages our faults are usually exposed in a magnified scale. But we have success stories too. And I believe that the success stories greatly outnumber the failures. So, it leaves a definite negative mark on the overall state of surgical treatment in our country," argued Dr. Kabir.

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a home-based solution to all our surgical problems and needs," concluded a hopeful Dr. Kabir.

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"Now, there's no such thing as general surgery in the developed world. Every form of surgery has been divided," said Dr. Kabir.

"In the newly independent Bangladesh we were in desperate need for orthopaedic surgeons. Professor Ghaste, an American orthopaedic surgeon came to Bangladesh and trained our surgeons in this sub-specialty. Now we have some good orthopaedic surgeons in our country. Similarly, we have some very competent surgeons in Urology. Patients suffering from kidney and prostate related complications can be treated through urological surgery. We also need a very good number of cardio-vascular surgeons. With the growing threat of heart disease looming large, their expertise is badly needed."

To my knowledge there are about 10-12 surgeons in this sub-specialty and a few among them are expected to retire from government service in a year or two. An experienced surgeon is made to retire like any other government employee at the age of 57, when he can easily contribute positively to the profession for five or six more years. So, it leaves a definite negative mark on the overall state of surgical treatment in our country," argued Dr. Kabir.

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THE fourth International Surgical Congress which brought together some 500 surgeons from home and abroad in the city concluded Sunday, December 19, 1993.

The congress, organised by the Society of Surgeons of Bangladesh (SOSB) discussed over 100 scientific topics and helped exchange of ideas and projection of new thoughts and

fast moving towards subspecialisation with high-tech sophistication and we are striving to keep pace with it. Significant developments have been achieved in different fields of surgery," he said and added, "however, further developments are still required. Support from all quarters in this regard is essential for such achievement."

Prof A S M Fazlul Karim said, "In the last congress, held two years ago, in my presidential speech I predicted a march forward in surgery. Indeed some development has taken place since, namely lithotripsy and laparoscopic surgery, but these have remained confined in one or two small centres in Dhaka."

He suggested that those pro-

cedures needed further evaluation because of difference of opinion so that the common man could get the benefit.

The society was formed in 1979 with 57 founder members. Today, the number rose to over 200.

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President of the Society of Surgeons of SAARC countries and a memberbody of the International Federation of Surgical Colleges. A large number of its members are also elected fellows of the International College of Surgeons of which Bangladesh is now a new section.

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commonest problem unfortunately taxes the hospital resources and manpower. The situation should be improved by social motivation. Since a good number of cases could not be managed without general anaesthesia, this facility should be made available to all district hospitals. At the same time trained manpower should be provided to the outpatient department to handle the minor surgical procedures efficiently.

Frequency of head and neck cancers, a one year study of cancer patients attending the dept. of radiotherapy, Dhaka Medical College Hospital

Dr. Parveen Shahida Akhtar

Department of Radiotherapy, Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Dhaka.

During the year 1992, 3272 new cancer patients were seen in the Radiotherapy Department of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Out of these 3272 patients, 2180 were male and 1112 female. 849 (25.94%) were head and neck cancers, males comprising 659 (30.51% of all cancers in males and females 190 (17.09%) of all cancers in females), male-female ratio being 3.46:1.

In males, 75.64% of head and neck cancers occur in larynx and pharynx. On the other hand in females 73.69% occur in oral cavity and pharynx. Cancers of oral cavity, larynx and paranasal sinuses occur rather in advanced age, the peak being in between 60-69 years. In oral and pharynx nose and salivary glands they occur one decade earlier, peak occurrence being between 50-59 years. Nasopharyngeal malignancies are neoplasms of still younger adults, 50% occurring between the ages 10-29 years.

Neck node metastasis is a common presentation (50.77%) in head and neck cancers, among which pharyngeal malignancies show the highest frequency (70.32%) of neck node involvement.

Squamous cell carcinoma is predominantly the main histopathological variety (95% to 100%) in tumours of oral cavity, larynx, oro and hypopharynx. On the other hand Histopathology of different varieties are found in cancers of nose, nasopharynx, paranasal sinuses and salivary glands.

Above are some of the scientific papers presented in the International Congress, along with the names of the papers and their writers.

Supracondylar fractures were more common in males whereas colles were more common in females. The commonest site of abscess was in the limbs (48%). Total number of cases operated was 370, of which 338 were done under local anaesthesia. Spinal and caudal anaesthesia were given in some cases. General anaesthesia was essential in 12.5% of the inpatients and less than 2% of outpatient cases, all of whom were referred to hospitals with general anaesthesia facilities.

Physical assault, being the

country which is by no standards enough. Burn injuries that occur so often in our country can be treated by plastic surgery, but we do not have any burn units in any of the hospitals of the country. In such a situation little can be expected from a handful of surgeons," commented a displeased Dr. Shafquat.

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