



Swasthya Surgery

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The Spring issue of Swasthya is a Cardiology focus issue. There are five articles relevant to various surgical specialities. For many around the world, surgery can be the only hope for a normal life and the Spring issue of Swasthya touches some facets of this exciting and challenging speciality.

One of these facets is paediatric cardiac surgery, which is known to be one of the most challenging surgical specialities. In his article, Dr Thareen takes a closer look at the challenges facing this niche speciality and the progress it has made in improving lives. Around 1.3 million children are born with Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) worldwide and sadly many do not have the option of diagnosis or corrective surgery. Nevertheless, corrective surgery - when available - can be a lifesaving event for the children affected and life altering for their families.

Dr Gupta discusses a topic that has similarly life altering consequences for children in his article on the 'miracle' of microvascular surgery, which focuses on the case study of an abandoned baby boy. Dr Gupta's article follows the child from his initial life and limb threatening injuries through the long road to recovery with multiple plastic surgical procedures to when he finally reaches a happy adulthood.

Surgeons are innovators and inventors by nature. In the Socratic dialogue 'Republic', Plato states that "our need will be the real creator" which has been transfigured over time into the English proverb 'Necessity is the mother of invention.' Thus, working in settings with limited resources does not restrict surgeons, as they can still improve through innovation. Dr. Gnanaraj's article in this issue on the frugal innovations a rural surgery in India has made provides a fascinating illustration of this proverb and demonstrates how such innovations can be cost saving without compromising safety.

Frugal scientific innovations can make science, accessible worldwide at an affordable cost. The profile of Prof. Manu Prakash and few of his key innovations are featured in the innovator profile.

However, even when the most careful precautions are taken to ensure safety, surgery can be a risky speciality and surgeons need to be realistic in delivering their surgical expertise. Whilst a technically perfect surgical operation does not guarantee a perfect clinical outcome, it is also important not to be too pessimistic in discussing risks vs benefits of any surgical intervention. Dr Govil Bhaskar explores this tension in her article and advocates a realistic balanced optimism, which is important for surgeons to maintain in the face of the unexpected.

Any surgical intervention requires a balanced optimism, with room for frugal and imaginative innovations.

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