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SEPTEMBER 15, 2013 BY MOTUNRAYO JOEL

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Harshad M. Shah is a Professor and Head of Orthopaedics at M.S. Ramaiah Memorial Hospital, Bangalore, India. Shah, who is visiting Nigeria for a health screening exercise, shares his experiences with MOTUNRAYO JOEL.

What attracted you to orthopaedic surgery?

I am always fascinated by surgery of any kind. Orthopaedic surgery is my favourite because it gives me the opportunity of facing many challenges.

How has orthopaedics changed over time?

Orthopaedics has changed tremendously over the last 26 years that I have been at M S Ramaiah Hospitals. From simple trauma treatment, orthopaedic surgery has grown in such a way that people are now specialising in sub-specialities. Old surgeries have replaced new ones. Old concepts have changed to newer ones. Understanding of orthopaedics has improved

vastly due to great advancement in technology. We use the world's best implants available to get the best of results. Today, complication rates have dropped tremendously. Complex trauma with infections, deformities like shortening of limbs which could not be treated earlier are now being treated. Orthopaedics has changed and it is fast changing still.

What are the improvements in this area of medicine?

Many improvements in orthopaedic care have taken place. Orthopaedic surgeons have been improving as they garner more experiences. We also keep learning and training other orthopaedic surgeons across the world at the hospital. The second most important aspect of orthopaedic care is that we have high tech infrastructure and personnel to handle and manage this. We have the best implants available and vast experience to perform a huge number of surgeries. We have also trained and produced more than 150 orthopaedic surgeons from our college and they are operating all over the country. We now also have one of the world's best 'Advanced Learning Centre' including 'Hand on Surgical Training on Cadavers' other than having 'Dry Bone Training Lab,' with more than 100 mannequins for all the basic and advanced trainings in all subjects for undergraduates, postgraduates and specialists. Also, regular training programmes are being conducted by our experienced employees from outside the country. Doctors from all over the world attend trainings here.

What are the challenges facing orthopaedic surgery?

Most of the hurdles are being overcome with our efficient management. As a result, we follow protocols and policies in doing our work. We have all the required specialists and treatment methods under one roof for comprehensive patient care at the hospital.

How important do you think personalised medicine will be, in the future of orthopaedic care?

It is very important for a patient to have the 'doctor's touch and care.' No amount of patient satisfaction will be there if he is treated and there is no personalised care. Personalised medicine is very important.

Blood clots seems to be one of the most common problems people face, how can one prevent blood clots?

Depending on the patient's age, condition, immobilisation, his diseases, etc, there are methods to prevent blood clots. We use some or all these methods, both physical like stockings, early mobilisation and medicines to prevent blood clots. We use the help of efficient physiotherapists as well as other doctors like cardiologists, vascular surgeons and others where required.

If one does not have a family history of clots, does one need to ask a doctor whether one need blood thinners when one's hip or knee is replaced?

It is necessary to ask one's doctor. This will be taken care of by him as he will ask for all details and also see that he treats the patient as required, depending on your condition and requirements. You should also be seen by a cardiologist for usage of blood thinners if necessary.

What are the signs and symptoms of a blood clot?

The signs and symptoms blood clot vary from just simple leg pain to sudden breathlessness due to a clot in the lungs.

What should one do if one thinks he has a blood clot?

Please inform your doctor immediately whether in the day or at night.

What factors increase one's chances of getting a blood clot after knee or hip replacement surgery?

It depends on the patient's age, co-morbidity, ambulatory status, history of treatment for cardiac conditions with blood thinners, etc.

What do you think the future holds for orthopaedic care?

There is going to be a great future for orthopaedic surgeons and patients as this is fast moving in the world. More population, more old people and more accidents lead to increased number of patients everywhere.

Why are you in Nigeria?

This is my first visit to Nigeria. I am sure I will be able to provide the best help for people who cannot get my kind of treatment. This is because I specialise in infections, limb lengthening and reconstruction surgeries with 20 years experience. This qualifies me as one of the most experienced in this kind of treatment.

How do you plan to contribute to Nigeria's health care?

My colleagues and I will give our best in this field of medicine to all patients.

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