

Pakistan (BFIRST Affiliation Project) Muhammed Riaz October 2017

Pakistan has a population of over 207 million, with a population increase of 57% since 1998. It is estimated that a third of the country lives in poverty with no access to healthcare and education. Healthcare in Pakistan is administered predominantly in the private sector. The public sector is led by provincial health departments and there are significant disparities in urban-rural healthcare delivery, with only 0.9% of GDP spent on healthcare.

Challenges in Plastic Surgery in Pakistan

Cleft lip and palate is particularly common in Pakistan with an incidence of 1 in 500 live births. Currently there are 52 registered members of the Pakistan Association of Plastic Surgeons, with numerous overseas members. There are a limited number of cleft, lip and palate specialists and due to the lack of a welfare state, many patients cannot pay and go untreated.



History

The Overseas Plastic Surgery Appeal (OPSA) is a registered charity that provides free plastic surgery procedures to underprivileged children and young adults. Initially founded in 1998 but known as the Hull & East Riding Overseas Plastic Surgery Appeal – annual camps were held in a private hospital in Gujarat by a specialist team from Hull, with funding and support from the local Bashir family via the Decent Welfare Society. This Society evolved into the Pakistan Cleft Lip and Palate Association in 2002 with continued work of Dr Ijaz Bashir. In 2003 the charities name changed to OPSA from 2008-present, additional funds have allowed the camps to be held bi-annually, and additional specialists from the UK, Ireland and Turkey have joined the team. 2016 saw the move to the new purpose built cleft hospital on the outskirts of Gujarat, following funding from the Japanese government and Midland International Aid Trust. There are outpatient facilities for local Dentistry, Ear Nose and Throat and Speech and Language Therapy specialists. Locally trained surgeons work there regularly – treating cleft and general plastic surgery conditions - with the service free at the point of care. All catering and accommodation are now provided on site, via the great hospitality of the Bashir family and local staff. Expansion and development continues.

Expertise Provided

The surgical team for each camp includes a minimum of two consultant plastic surgeons, who specialize in cleft, lip and palate, a consultant maxillofacial surgeon, two consultant anaesthetists, a theatre sister and anaesthetist assistant / operating department practitioner.

To date, the team has collectively treated thousands of patients. but fundamentally, they have disseminated their knowledge and skills to train the core theatre, recovery and ward staff hospital staff.

In addition to cleft care, Dr Bashir now also provides a limb fitting service and Miss Penny McManus continues to improve breast cancer awareness with breast clinics offered on site, as well as educational events and live operating at hospitals across the country.

The camp ran from 13 – 22/10/17. A total of 70 cases were operated on performing a mixture of cleft lip and palate repairs – both primary and secondary revisions, cleft rhinoplasties and congenital malformations. Operating days lasted more than 10 hours per day. Each day began with a surgical ward round of preoperative and postoperative cases. An outpatient clinic ran simultaneously with a high volume of cases assessed, with patients travelling from all over Pakistan.

The cases seen ranged across the breath of elective plastic surgical conditions, of varying complexities. Cases were triaged accordingly and treated as resources allowed. The clinical experience gained was incomparable with that from the UK. Many people harbour misconceptions about Pakistan, influenced by Western media, but the experience was truly memorable. The local hospital staff were admirable in their work ethic and organisational skills, allowing such a high volume of cases to pass safely through the hospital and the hospitality afforded by the local people was overwhelming.