

A tribute to Mr. William Harkness



About 100 years ago, Harvey Cushing started to perform neurological surgery in children with promising initial results, followed by Frank Ingraham and Donald Matson. They established the roots of pediatric neurosurgery as a standalone subspecialty. Nevertheless, for almost half a century neurosurgical care of children remained within the broad spectrum of general neurosurgery until 1972 when the international Society for Pediatric Neurosurgery (ISPN) was created under the vision of Antoni Raimondi (USA), Maurice Choux (France), Raul Carrea (Argentina), Satoshi Matsumoto (Japan), Kenneth Till (UK), and Bruce Hendricks (Canada) among others.

In the next 50 years, pediatric neurosurgery blossomed into a complex and demanding medical and surgical discipline, encompassing the many unique needs of a developing nervous system and its congenital and acquired

diseases. We now are able to perform in utero surgery, treat hydrocephalus with the assistance of neuro endoscopy, navigate intravascular catheters to reach and treat complex vascular abnormalities, ablate deep foci that produce seizure activity with the aid of lasers, and inhibit M-TOR protein expression to revert growth of SEGA tumors.

However, despite all these and many other advances, neurosurgical care for children is still facing inequity in many underdeveloped areas of the world due to low income and access to affordable healthcare, underdeveloped healthcare facilities, and lack of specialized pediatric care, not only in neurosurgery but in all the associated infrastructures, the overburden of preventable diseases caused by complications of labor and childbirth, neonatal sepsis, trauma and especially by a large number of patients with neural tube defects which can be

prevented by public healthcare policies such as staple food fortification with folate.

William Harkness understood this all too well and while he devoted his career to the complexities of epilepsy surgery at the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children in London, he never hesitated to travel extensively to all corners of the world in order to teach and learn from different cultures. These experiences later blended into effectively participating in the creation of Intersurgeon as well as the Global Initiative for Children's Surgery (GICS), both of which seek to create networks of resources, surgical departments, and individuals that uplift the surgical care of children all around

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the globe. A natural leader, he would go on to become President of the ISPN. His presidential message was a collage of concepts that reinforced the idea of global medical care as an attainable priority.

William was a gifted surgeon, a caring clinician, a renaissance man but especially a true friend to many of us who had the privilege of experiencing his knowledge, wit, humor, and company. It is only natural that this special edition of the Journal of Global Neurosurgery is dedicated to his memory and legacy in the hope of expanding pediatric neurosurgery to those who need it the most.