The evolution of FRACS (Urology)

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The urological surgical training program has evolved a number of times in order to tackle the challenges presented by evolving technology, the needs of trainees and community expectations, according to an article in the latest issue of the Australia and New Zealand Journal of Surgery (ANZJS), the peer-review publication of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS).

The article, which details a review undertaken by Assoc. Prof. Prem Rashid (FRACS) of the Urological Centre, Port Macquarie Base Hospital, Dr Athina Pirpiris of the University of New South Wales and Dr Amanda Chung (FRACS) of the Concord Repatriation General Hospital, begins with a snapshot of times gone by dating as far back as the 14th Century when a ban was lifted on the dissection of the human body by the Catholic Church.

From this point forward the review covers medieval times which saw ‘Barber Surgeons’ performing invasive procedures such as amputations, tooth extractions as well as haircuts with no formal education or training. According to the review, the removal of stones was one of the first procedures performed, albeit with high rates of infection and haemorage.

With the discovery of anaesthesia in 1799, patient theatrical performances were finally left for the stage with the introduction of nitrous oxide in 1842 and chloroform in 1847, and the discovery of antisepsis in 1867. The review states that around the same time, sterilisation was introduced and the first surgical gloves were worn 1890.

According to the research, the first Fellowship of Surgeons was established separate from the Barber Surgeons, but in 1540 the Barber’s Company and the Fellowship of Surgeons united. In 1745 the ‘Company of Surgeons’ was formed but broke away from the Barber’s for reasons of increased expectation of professionalism in the field. In 1800 the Company of Surgeons was granted a Royal Charter by King George IV and the Royal College of Surgeons was formed in London. In 1926 RACS was born and began to award the Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (FRACS).

A new era of education, examination and training began which over many years has changed and continues to change with the emergence of new technology, state-of-the-art equipment, and international standards. The report provides a thorough historical breakdown of just how far we’ve come in the field of surgical innovation and what is still to come.

Read the full article here

The ANZ Journal of Surgery, published by Wiley-Blackwell, is the pre-eminent surgical journal published in Australia, New Zealand and the South-East Asian region for the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. The Journal is dedicated to the promotion of outstanding surgical practice, and research of contemporary and international interest.

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About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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