

Bai Jerbai Wadia Hospital for Children and Institute of Child Health and Research, Mumbai

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THE BEGINNING

With a legacy of more than nine decades, Bai Jerbai Wadia Hospital for Children and Institute of Child Health and Research is the first and the largest hospital in the country devoted for child health and welfare. It is the first ever public hospital established in India exclusively for children by a joint agreement between the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai and the Wadia Family in the year 1929. Late Sir Cusrow Wadia and Late Sir Ness Wadia, the two sons of Bai Jerbai Nowrosjee Wadia built this children hospital in her memory and declared it open on 12 December, 1929. Realization of the need for special care for children and establishing a hospital for them in the heart of the city, amidst the working classes of Mumbai, by itself displays the vision and philanthropic ideals and legacy of serving the poor on part of the founders.

Over the years, the foresight of the management and the faculty heads, who were committed to strike a balance amongst the four pillars of medical academia as in patient care, administrative, education and research, has modelled this institution to have a pride of place among the pediatric hospitals in India.

The Early Years

The hospital was started with a bed strength of 126 with medical and surgical indoor and a novel outpatient department in a separate building with 24 hour emergency which was the first in India for children. Basic pathology investigations and radiology services were also made available. Departments of physiotherapy and occupational therapy were started to complement Orthopedic department and for rehabilitation of handicapped children. Social Service Department with Child Guidance Clinic rendering services for the deserving, a special school for bedridden children and a recreation center were the other features in the initial period.

Dr. RN Cooper was the founder principal medical officer followed by Dr. Arthur De Sa who also established the

pediatric surgery department. The recognition of this hospital in the early years was due to the dedicated and pioneering efforts of Dr. Cooper, Dr. De Sa, Dr. RV Sanzgiri and Dr. Katrak. They were pioneers in recognizing pediatric medicine and surgery as separate specialties. During this period training of residents was the only teaching activity.

The Middle Years – 1950 to 1990

During the next phase of expansion of the institute, one more floor was added to the hospital in 1964 and bed strength went up to 300 beds. There were parallel developments of both pediatric medicine and surgery when Dr. RA Irani, Dr. SM Merchant, Dr. SJ Dalal and later, Dr. Jer Master, Dr. MP Desai, Dr. KP Mehta and Dr. KN Shah joined the institute. The main focus during this time was to make the institute a high quality and cost-effective tertiary health care center by adding pediatric and neonatal intensive care units. Pediatric intensive care was established by Dr. Uma Ali and Neonatal intensive care unit was coordinated by Dr. Prem Sheth.

In 1975, the Burns unit and Skin Bank were established by Dr. SS Keswani and Dr. Arvind Vartak. The hospital was then recognized by University of Bombay for undergraduate and post graduate training in pediatrics through its affiliation to Seth G S Medical College. The College of Physicians and Surgeons also recognized this hospital for DCH and FCPS. The hospital was also recognized by Royal College of Physicians and Child Health and Royal College of Surgeons. A full-fledged post-graduate training program took shape consisting of daily ward rounds, post emergency teaching clinics, weekly inter hospital pediatric meetings, monthly grand rounds and postgraduate seminars which are still a routine now. The Dr. SM Merchant Auditorium is used for such teaching programs, workshops and small conferences.

The novel feature of this hospital was the establishment of specialty clinics in cardiology, endocrinology,

nephrology and epilepsy with EEG for the first time in India. The aim was to provide adequate and essential diagnostic services for this subset of commonly seen conditions along with clinical research for greater insight into their epidemiology, etiopathogenesis and clinical patterns in Indian settings, thereby offering greater opportunities for learning and training in these specialties.

The Hospital in the Later Years and Today (1990-till date)

After 2000, these specialty clinics were expanded further into divisions offering cutting-edge sub-specialty care, simultaneously maintaining basic general pediatrics.

Pediatric Cardiology division, which was the first subspecialty to be established in 1968 by Dr Jer Master and later assisted by Dr NC Joshi, has now become a state of art center for cardiac sciences with cardiac surgery and interventional cardiology.

The Thyroid clinic was started by Dr Meena Desai in 1969 and she did exemplary work in congenital hypothyroidism. It has now become one of the largest pediatric endocrinology divisions in the country.

Nephrotic syndrome clinic was started in 1975 by Dr. Kumud Mehta. First peritoneal dialysis was done in 1980 and Hemodialysis department was started in 2010, and now is a full-fledged pediatric nephrology department with a renal transplant center.

Epilepsy Clinic was started in 1989 by Dr KN Shah. Since 1994, it has become a full-fledged, busy neurosciences department. Pediatric neurosurgery department under Dr Chandrashekhar Deopujari was established in 1996.

Dr Zinet Currimbhoy started the hematology and immunology clinic in 1984, which has now evolved into a super specialty hemato-onco unit with Bone Marrow Transplant and Stem Cell Therapy.

Pediatric HIV was started by Dr Rashid Merchant in 1998 and TB clinic was started in 2007. Pediatric drug-resistant TB center, first one in India, was established in 2018.

Dr. Saroj Parekh started the Liver Clinic, which has now evolved into a full fledged Pediatric Gastroenterology division with endoscopy and motility lab under Dr Ira Shah. In 2015, pediatric pulmonology services were started by Dr. YK Amdekar.

Another major milestone during this stage was the establishment of a research laboratory which had modern, sophisticated, diagnostic equipment with Radioimmunoassay, Hematology and Immunology sections and recently the Molecular laboratory. This research laboratory is

recognized by Department of Science and Technology, ICMR and WHO. ICMR has also established an independent Genetic Research Laboratory here.

Pediatric Surgery Department flourished under Dr S J Dalal's guidance with Dr Vinod Kapur starting laparoscopy in 1974, Dr Ashok Mathure taking care of respiratory anomalies and Dr Vishnu Waingankar and Dr Ila Meisheri having started the Urosurgery division. Currently Dr Pradnya Bendre has set up a 'state of art' endoscopy and minimal access surgery center. There is also a perinatal surgery division which holds credit for having operated on conjoined twins. We have a special center devoted to cleft lip and palate surgeries under Dr Mukund Thatte.

The Pediatric Orthopedic surgery department started surgery for complex deformities and spine problems under the luminaries Dr Yagnik, and Dr Ashok Johari. The Club foot clinic is one of the busiest in Western India.

The radiology services were started very early under the guidance of Dr Nadkarni and presently the hospital has round the clock dedicated pediatric ultrasound and CT/MRI services.

The Pediatric palliative care department is first of its kind in India and specialized anesthesia and rehabilitation services are there to compliment patient care.

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

BJWHC has conducted numerous health camps for children across many states including several areas in Maharashtra like Palghar, wherein the impact can already be measured in the community with decrease in number of malnourished children. BJWHC is also providing support for capacity building, disaster management, screening and treatment of health conditions and knowledge management for Government and non-profit organizations.

State Center of Excellence in Pediatric Nutrition, supported by UNICEF, is a hub of State nutrition programs.

BJWHC has received Nursing Excellence Certificate from National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare for 2 consecutive terms, which is rare for a public hospital. The hospital has NABH and NABL accreditation and moving towards complete digitization.

Every year the entire community comes together to participate in the Little Hearts Marathon (LHM), which is a social event to engage the community and help spread awareness for prevention of cardiac diseases in children. More than hundred thousand children have supported the cause of LHM over the last 6 years.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

There are 35 pediatric super specialty programs along with undergraduate and postgraduate degree and diploma courses. Fifteen fellowship courses, under the aegis of Maharashtra University of Health Sciences and Indian Academy of Pediatrics as well as DNB super specialty courses in pediatric hematology, neonatology and pediatric cardiology, pediatric intensive care, pediatric gastroenterology are run by the hospital

Since 2004, a biannual week-long national post-graduate clinical teaching program is being held along with a month-long clinical DCH and DNB clinical observership. The faculty over the last many decades has been feted in numerous national and international platforms.

The hospital has won over 50 national and international health sector service awards and the motto of the hospital – *In deo fide et perseverantia*, meaning Trust in God and Perseverance, sums up its philosophy.

What keeps the hospital at the forefront of Pediatrics in India and beyond, is the professional competence, continuous innovation and dedication of all departments who manned the hospital during last nine decades.

THE ICONS OF THE INSTITUTION

The path-breaking personalities responsible for the initial growth and development of the hospital were Prof. SM Merchant.

Dr SM Merchant joined the hospital in 1949 and was primarily associated with its initial growth and also mentored future leaders. He promoted establishment of subspecialties and was also a research innovator and set up the research laboratory. He was a teacher par excellence and one of the towering figures of pediatric medicine in India. He used to consider the hospital as his family, and used to say that people working here are the foundations of the institute and they should be brought together, helped to flourish academically, and made to feel valued.

Recently, since 2012, the hospital has grown by leaps and bounds under the visionary leadership of Dr Minnie Bodhanwala. Due to her pioneering efforts, the hospital now has 525 beds, of which 225 are intensive care beds.

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The hospital in 1929.



The hospital in 2019.



Aerial View of BJWHC.



Dr. SM Merchant



Legends of Bai Jerbai Wadia Hospital for Children – 15 February, 2018.