

AO Courses : A Continuing Service to Reach Out

Background

Thailand is experiencing in increasing accidents that lead to serious bone fractures. Statistically, accident ranks as a second leading cause of death. Fortunately, technology and medical progress have come up with effective treatment methods and cures that can now offer a victim fresh hope for recovery to go back to his normal life and work.

But like other branches of knowledges, the treatment methods for fractured bones require skills that only seasoned surgeons can impart. The AO courses provide the venue through which this knowledge and skill can propagate to the service of mankind. For 15 years, AO concept has been practiced in Thailand. But it is not until ten years ago that the AO International workshop has started at Pramungkutklao Hospital. From then on, AO teaching is annually organized for both surgeons and nurses.

Bangkok Hosted the 1991 AO Basic Course and AO Advanced Nurse Course

The joint efforts and coordinations of Thai Orthopaedic Association and AO International resulted in AO Basic Course and AO Advanced Nurse Course which were held on September 26, 1991 at Mahavajiralongkon Building, Pramungkutklao Hospital.

Originally called "Operative Treatment of Fractures", AO Courses cover a rich combination of theories and hands-on. Training courses conducted in Thailand for both orthopaedic surgeons and operating nurses have been going on since 1984, and participated in by, at least, 300 surgeons from all

over. Local courses handled by a sub-committee appointed by the Thai Orthopaedic Association tap active trauma surgeons as lecturers and instructors from several recognized institutions and medical schools.

The nurse education for AO technique has been conducted for the seventh times since 1985. There are about 600 operating theater personnels who had completed the courses. This year, the first AO Advanced Nurse Course was held concurrently with the AO Basic Course, drew more than 60 participants with an increasing number expressing interest to participate in future courses. If anything, this growing awareness alone is indicative thing of the quality of the trainings conducted, let alone first-hand affirmations from satisfied participants.

That should not come as a surprise, indeed, the 1991 AO Basic Course can rightfully be classified as World-class. Prominent international lecturers from different countries converged for this occasion, among them Professor U. Pfister from Karlsruhe, Germany; Dr. F. Thielemann from Switzerland; Dr. Gautier, from France; Dr. Barry D' Rosario from India; including Dr. Suthorn Bavanratanavech from Pramungkutklao Hospital, Thailand; and Ms. Anne Murphy from AO International. Of course, the contributions of the local doctors and nurses can not be ignored. They also participated in the lectures and helped in the workshops as table instructors. Undoubtedly, many doctors gained-invaluable knowledge in every course held that can be helpful very much to the benefit to their patients.





A Tribute to a Great Man

The foundation of the local AO Courses can be traced to the efforts of a great man, Dr. Suthorn Bavonratanavech, currently the Colonel and Chief of the B Service Unit of Pramungkutklao Hospital, Dr. Suthorn concerns himself primarily with traumatic cases of bone fractures.

Dr. Suthorn was still a resident doctor when he first developed interest in this field. At that time, Dr. Thamrongrat Keokarn, Chairman of the Orthopaedic Department, Pramungkutklao Medical Center had foreseen the advantage of using AO instrumentation. However, when the equipment came, the surgeons were completely unfamiliar with the instrumentation. Dr. Suthorn looked on the challenge and started off on self-help using a textbook called "AO Manual of Internal Fixation".

In 1978, he attended an AO Basic Course in Davos that gave him a better understanding of the principles and techniques of AO instrumentation. Soon enough, he discovered that proper applications of AO instrumentation indeed gave good results. Later, after taking the AO Advanced Course, his skill and expertise in AO instrumentation zoomed into the great heights, while he developed and fostered a good relationship with AO senior faculties. With plenty of practical experience and teaching expertise, he was appointed as an AO member. Later in 1989, he was elected to the Board of Trustees of the AO Foundation. This made him one of the Asian AO International Faculty group responsible for teaching and training-including workshops- in the Asian region.

And all this brings honor to Thailand.

Other Partners in the Success

Surgeons are the brains during the operations but the nurses are their extensions. They, too, must partake of the recognition afforded the surgeons. For their jobs, although oftentimes at the sidelights, also demand exacting performance. They have to be very thoroughly conversant with an assortment of instrumentation as they assist the doctors. And proper usage extends to the care and maintenance. Effective utilization of the equipment can be gained if they had the proper trainings and substantial savings can be earned if basic repairs and replacements are minimized.

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