

The Minutes of the meeting of the Derby Medical Society

Held on 17th November 2015 in the Derby Medical School

Apologies: None received

Welcome: Dr J Charlton, President.

Minutes for the meeting 4th November 2015: No minutes as the guest lecturer was unable to attend the meeting as a result of train delays

Guest Lecture: Mr Bruce Richards, Consultant Plastic Surgeon, Birmingham Children's Hospital – "Hands up in Nepal – tendon transfers and smiles for people affected by leprosy"

Mr Richards first gained an interest in leprosy on his medical student elective working at a leprosy hospital in Nepal in 1979. This interest was developed further during 3 years working in Pokara, Nepal after he gained his FRCS.

Leprosy affects about 1:10,000 of the Nepalese population, and is not particularly infectious compared with other infectious diseases. The causative mycobacterium prefers a temperature of around 32°C and slowly multiplies in peripheral nerves. Only a proportion of infected individuals produce an immune response, which leads to the development of peripheral neuropathy. Others do not produce an immune reaction and do not get neuropathy, but develop cutaneous disease. It is these individuals who spread the disease.

Medical treatment of leprosy is with a combination of dapsone, rifampicin and clofazamine, with steroid cover.

Sensory neuropathy leads to loss of protective skin sensation, loss of proprioception, and loss of autonomic control of sweat glands. This leads to foot ulceration, infection, and sometimes amputation. Monofilament testing identifies areas of neuropathic skin. Education about foot care is the most important aspect of treatment, in order to prevent ulceration. Established ulceration can be treated with bed rest, elevation, skin care, and then total contact casting.

Motor neuropathy affects distal limb muscles, intrinsic muscles of hands and feet, and sometimes facial muscles. This can result in foot drop, claw hand, loss of thumb opposition, claw toes, and facial nerve palsy. Mr Richards described various tendon transfers and reconstructive procedures that he has used to improve function in affected individuals, illustrated with many clinical slides. Surgical neurolysis of affected nerves improves motor function, but does not restore sensation.

Mr Richards has conducted a great deal of research into leprosy related neuropathy, looking at the location of the nerve lesions, and establishing research links between Nepal and the UK. However he sees his main role as being to educate Nepalese surgeons.

Questions included:

- The organization of leprosy services in Nepal, and the importance of teaching
- Compliance with treatment for plantar ulcers
- The role of overseas visiting surgical teams
- Prevention of leprosy

Vote of thanks: given by Dr Hossain Shahidullah

Register: signed by 30 members, 1 guest and 33 students

Next meeting: 8th December 2015

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Dr J Charlton, President

Date: