

Plastic Surgery in India and in quite a few developing countries has failed to catch the attention of the people, the government and our own colleagues because of its name. To the common man the word PLASTIC does not convey much. It does not suggest who we are, which patients we treat and which organs we specialise in. We do not treat any particular disease like the diabetologist or the rheumatologist. We do not treat any particular age group like the paediatrician or the geriatrician. We do not treat any particular sex like the gynaecologist or the andrologist and we do not treat any particular organ like the cardiologist or the nephrologist. In fact very few people know that the word PLASTIC comes from the Greek word 'Plasticos' which means to recreate! This fancy word has been a huge source of confusion. Whereas it was intended to convey the sense of innovativeness to our specialty, it has ended up at best in mystifying it and at worst in categorizing us as some elitists cosmetic surgeons treating the filthy rich only.

The ignorance is not only in the society but also among doctors and medical students, particularly those who were trained in medical institutions which did not have a Plastic Surgery department. In several surveys conducted among these medical students a handsome proportion of them thought that Burns were treated by dermatologists and not Plastic Surgeons and rhinoplasty was performed by ENT surgeons and not Plastic Surgeons. Similarly Cleft lip and palate and facial fractures were thought to be in the exclusive domain of dentists and vascular malformations and and vascular trauma were being exclusively treated by vascular surgeons. We needed urgently to mark our territory which was shrinking because of a wide spread ignorance, only because the name of our specialty was not explicitly understandable and we were doing nothing about it. That is why our past President Dr. S. Rajasapathy proposed the concept of National Plastic Surgery Day.

Write up on why **National Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Day** by Dr. Raja Sabapathy (President APSI 2011)

### **Genesis of National Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Day**

As plastic surgeons, I am sure each one of us at some time or the other would have felt that the public needs to be more aware of all the things that we do. This is a topic which comes out in the Yahoo groups once every few months, is the subject of discussion when a group of plastic surgeons meet or even cited as the reason for most problems that involve the patient – doctor relationship in our field.

Even after two decades of work, still I think the public awareness of what we do could be more. So all of us agree that something needs to be done. We do good but we are not good at telling the world that part of the story. When I took over the President of the APSI, I thought we should do something to correct it. I thought we need to create an opportunity to **every plastic surgeon** to tell the world what he or she is doing. Just as I was mulling over that idea, on one Sunday an item in the newspaper caught my attention. It was an article on 'World Sparrow Day'. It said that the number of sparrows have diminished so much that in the years to come there may not be any. It also said that a day has been created so that this point would be got into the minds of people. It was successful. If the headline has just been the number of sparrows have come down I would not have continued to read it. I thought it would be a good idea to create a **Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Day**, and it would provide an opportunity to every plastic surgeon to make it known to the community he practices what he is doing. If as an individual I do something there is a limit to what it can achieve. As a collective body if at one particular time or day if every plastic surgeon does something then the media will take note. That is the genesis of the idea. That is the same thought behind asking everyone to switch off the lights for a few minutes at the same time to highlight the problem of global warming.

World over this is a practice to catch the attention of people for a public cause. This is followed by all organizations like the UN, WHO, UNICEF and many non medical professional bodies.

### Acceptance by the Executive of the APSI

I proposed it at the **midterm executive meeting of APSI in March 2011 at New Delhi**, and spoke about what it could achieve. The EC unanimously agreed to the idea and appreciated it. I wanted it to start that same year so that we make the beginning. Then started the discussion on the choice of the date.

### How July 15<sup>th</sup> came to be adopted?

We had in mind that the date must be a non-controversial one, must not clash with any national functions or festivals, a safe weather will be present in most parts of the country, and for the administration it must be easy to carry on the activities that we decide. It was my idea that every President could think of a theme for his year, explain it to the members in the beginning of the year, create a tremendous enthusiasm for the project, get it done with the day being the main day, take stock of the progress and come back and report about the success in the annual meeting which is usually held in the last quarter of the year. We could not get the Birthday of Sushruta. We discussed the birthdays of various people, but could not come to a conclusion. We thought of our association's registration day. Our association was initially part of ASI and the registration date and the separation date was in the later part of the year and that was not felt to be an appropriate one. Finally we wanted it to be in the middle of the year to meet our objectives and so we chose July 15<sup>th</sup> as the Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Day. While finalizing it I said, **'A day becomes significant by what we do to the community and the specialty than why we chose the particular date.'** All members agreed and we set July 15<sup>th</sup> as the Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Day.

### Gaining Government Recognition for the Day.



Dr. S. Raja Sabapathy, President, APSI and Dr. Atul Kumar Shah, Secretary, APSI explaining the proposal of the Association of Plastic Surgeons of India to observe the 15th July of every year as the Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Day to Hon Minister of Health, Shri. Ghulam Nabi Azad.



Members of the Association of Plastic Surgeons of India with Hon'ble Health Minister, Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad (L-R): Rakesh Khazanchi, Hon'ble Health Minister Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad, Dr. S. Raja Sabapathy, President APSI, Dr. Atul Kumar Shah, Secretary APSI

We decided to get the Government approval and with the help of Dr Rakesh Khazanchi, we set up an appointment with the Union Health Minister Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad. Our secretary Dr Atul Shah, Dr Rakesh and myself met him in his office in Delhi. I gave him a powerpoint presentation on all aspects of Plastic Surgery from congenital to aesthetic. He was surprised at what all we are doing, but was concerned about our poor penetration into the society and the spread of plastic surgeons was lopsided. We presented him the idea and requested him to declare July 15<sup>th</sup> as the Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Day. I said that we will make a call to request every plastic surgeon in the country to do at least one surgery free

that day. **He was extremely happy about the idea, said that it was a great concept. He also felt that ‘in one stroke you will catch public attention. How nice it would be if every association does it? It would be the best way to improve the doctor-patient relationship and a great image building exercise’.**

We found that the formalities to go through for the Government to declare a day as Plastic and Reconstructive surgery day was too much. – a need is to be established, then a proposal has to be made to the Government, it has to pass through all the stages of the administration, then usually a committee of some Director Generals will be appointed whose opinions will be got etc. Mr Azad’s secretary who himself was a doctor, suggested ‘You go ahead with the day. Use the meeting to announce the day. When in a few years the performance of what you do on that day makes an impact, it will be easy for the Government to make a formal announcement. If you wait for it, you cannot start it off this year.’ We also felt that there was some sense in it and went ahead and gave it to the press. It made news and a lot of people from all walks of life wrote to me that it was a great idea.

## What we did on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011

### PLASTIC AND RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY DAY - 15<sup>th</sup> JULY, 2011

Increasing the visibility and awareness of Plastic Surgery among the masses is a concern to every one of us. Creation of the Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Day addressed it to a great extent. This gives a truly first view of how it started and developed Origin of the Concept. It all started with the President Dr S Raja Sabapathy writing in one of the From your President..... letters (21 March, 2011)

**Concept of a "Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Day"**  
.....The next concept I have for your consideration is the creation of a "Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Day". Designated days help draw attention of the people to a cause, help characterize our efforts, do focused projects and help achieve our goals. That is the idea behind when days were dedicated for Children, Teachers and for environment etc. We have Awareness Day, Osteoporosis Day and so on. I think if the APSI dedicates a day as Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Day, then each year the association can do a major project around that day. Every President can plan for it a year ahead and make it a great success. It is left to his / her imagination and the needs of the society at that period of time.

This year I suggest we make a beginning. I am going to put this idea forward in our EC meeting and seek the acceptance of the concept, and decide on the day. In fact I think more than the date we choose, what we do with the concept will count more. I propose that for the first year, on that day all of us will offer our consultation free or perform at least one surgery free of charge to deserving patient that day. More than a thousand procedures will be done free. By doing that, we definitely will make an impact in the lives of people and their families and will also get into the hearts of many. The media cannot ignore us. The surgery could be a tendon transfer, a local flap or a free flap, a rhinoplasty, a cleft lip repair or a hair transplant. From doing a surgery free to offering a day's work free each of us can do what we can. We will do it and then we will say to the world that we did it and that we care.....

**APSI Executive Council at its mid-term meeting at New Delhi on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2011 accepts the proposal and decides the day as July 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Why 15<sup>th</sup> of July?**  
No specific reason. It was just a matter of convenience. At the EC we decided for a day in the middle of the year so that any President can drive home his theme for the year, gets things done and come to the APSICON.  
In fact I think more than the date we choose, what we do with the concept will count more. --- President's Newsletter of 21<sup>st</sup> March 2011.

**The Country responded**  
Plastic Surgeons responded by doing free surgeries, organizing press conferences, addressing public meetings and starting new services. It gave an opportunity and avenue for every plastic surgeon to improve the visibility of the specialty in his area.

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**Chennai**  
As part of the National Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery Day we at Apollo Hospitals Chennai have the following report to submit  
1. An ad was given in The Hindu dt 15.7.2011 (page 5) announcing the day and also a week starting July 15<sup>th</sup>.  
2. All OP patients were seen free and a few surgeries were also done free. Vascular tumor, Gluteal rotation flap, Hypoplasia, SSG foot (surgeon fees waived off).  
Dr. S. Ganapathy Krishna  
Genl. Stanley Hospital

**Trichy**  
Lymphangioma Excision  
Dr. Krishnamurthy

**Mysore**  
Press conference on Plastic Surgery Day - All 7 Plastic Surgeons of Mysore jointly addressed the Press of Mysore. Covered by all local editions and TV channels.  
Interview on FM channel about Plastic Surgery Day  
Free OP consultation Announced at Vikram Jeev Hospital on 15th July - 16 patients used services.  
An electric saw injury of the left hand of a college student with near total amputation of RF needing critical revascularisation was operated free at Vikram Jeev Hospital.  
Dr. Sathish H V

**Chennai**  
I have operated a case free at Mehta Hospital on Plastic surgery Day. Further in SRM Medical College and Hospital also the Dean has consented to make a case free.  
Cases done: SSG for PT area.  
Delayed primary repair of Zone VII EC index and MR repl Left upper limb.  
As for Elnken says "Nothing happens until something occurs".  
We have started moving with a hope that something good happens.  
Dr. Sankaranarayanan

**New Delhi**  
A bilateral hand replant was done on that day and after the routine work was over an awareness programme was conducted.  
Dr. G. Karthikgan and Prof. R. Krishnamurthy

**Kolkata**  
My humble offer on 15<sup>th</sup> July  
Dr. Sankaranarayanan

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**Lucknow**  
14th July 2011. A press conference was held at the Plastic Surgery department at 3:00 p.m. Dr. S. D. Pandey, Prof. A. K. Singh, Dr. Vijay Kumar, briefed about the plastic surgery, its development, Indian contribution, and misconceptions about the plastic surgery. Each plastic surgeon will operate one case free of cost. 15th July 2011. News papers published the news about plastic surgery in detail.  
Indian Medical Association, Lucknow branch celebrated Plastic Surgery Day on 15th July 2011. Three lectures were delivered for the members of Indian Medical Association Lucknow branch.  
Prof. A. K. Singh delivered lecture on Indian contribution in the development of plastic surgery. Dr. Surajit Bhattacharya delivered lecture on scope of plastic surgery. Dr. Anupam Saran talked about cosmetic surgery a need for society. 12 surgeries were done free of cost plastic surgery in Lucknow.  
16th July 2011. This event was well covered by the press - both Print and Electronic media

**Thiruvallur**  
Ca tongue Bone grafting Post burn contracture Vascular malformation Elite Mission Hospital  
Dr. Aniljit V.G. Dr. Anto Francis, Dr. K. Pradeep Kumar, Dr. Shaji Mathew & Dr. K. M. Pradeep

**Guwahati**  
Dear Dr Sabapathy, Congratulations on the day of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery Day. On this day, to mark the occasion the following were done:  
1. A meeting was specially held in our department with officers of the Office of the Director of Health Services dealing with programs on treatment of leprosy patients. Dr. D. Haskaria (Joint DMS) and Dr. B. T. Reddy (Joint DMS (SP)) , S. M. D. and others attended the meeting. The following decisions were taken:  
a. More avenues will be opened for improving management of leprosy affected persons who need reconstructive surgery.  
b. Special clinic for such patients will be held (including pre and post-operative physiotherapy).  
c. Training of doctors, nurses and paramedical staff of peripheral hospitals regarding management of the above in this department will be taken up for discussion with the government.  
2. On the behalf of the undersigned, the North East Medical Care & Research Center (NEMCARE) hospital of Guwahati has taken the resolution mentioned in the below mail. It may be mentioned here that the first patient of this hospital was a Plastic Surgery patient (Cleft Lip), surgery of which was done free of cost. This hospital is providing burn care under a Burn Care foundation pioneering in the state in the private sector.  
Dr. Bhupen Deka

**Aurangabad**  
As per your guidelines we have conducted special free camp today at our hospital.  
Dr. Ramakant Bembde

**Pune**  
We at Dist. Plastic Surgery B.J. Medical College and Sassoon General Hospital Pune have organized small function on that day. We will be doing our routine OT till in morning. We are also going to distribute some pamphlets and snacks to all our indoor patients.  
Dr. Parag Sabharwal

**Nanded**  
An instance of quality care reaching the unreachable  
Dr. Manish Deshpande

**Coimbatore**  
Post burn contracture - Anula released Team with rubber club hand child  
Dr. Raju Murad, Trivandrum

**Varanasi**  
Making great strides: from Sushruta to Smiling Pinki  
Plastic And Reconstructive Surgery Day Today  
I am in an administrative appointment at present. So the best I could do was to take a lecture for all the staff of my hospital on "Scope and limitations of Plastic Surgery".  
Dr. Manoj Kumar Singh, Anand Chandan

**Ahmedabad**  
Great that you have taken this initiative to start a Plastic Surgery Day. We have organized some charity surgeries for patients.  
Dr. Hemant Jais

**Dharwad**  
With utmost pleasure I wish to inform you and the entire fraternity of APSI that as initiated and suggested, we have successfully observed 15th July as "Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Day" at our SRM Medical College Hospital, Dharwad. Consultation of Plastic Surgery was made FREE on the day so also the Plastic surgeries posted for the day.  
Dr. Naveen Kumar

**Mangalore**  
Tendons  
Dr. Sathishkumar B.K.

**Erode**  
2 days old Flexor tendon injury repair  
Dr. V. S. Sankaranarayanan

The message was widely passed on and there was energetic participation. Young surgeons, surgeons practicing in the periphery participated with gusto. Many did really major procedures free. One even did a replant about which I am proud. Some opened some special services on that day. Apollo put in a Ad in Hindu on the Plastic and Reconstructive surgery day. I collected the feedback from colleagues from all over India as to what they did

. Most places had at least a news item in the local paper. Many talked in the local IMA. I have attached some of the reports which we put it in a board during the annual conference.

### How did the world respond?

I think all the people who participated and did something were very pleased. Normally you cant just call up a newspaper and say what you are doing. This day gives you an opportunity to do that. If one is interested in Aesthetic surgery, can give a talk or do a case, if one is interested in Diabetic foot can arrange a talk with diabetologists of the city, if interested in trauma can talk on prevention on hand injuries in a local industry association etc. Imagination is the limit and it has to be done according to the local needs.

The biggest surprise I had was in the President's message in the IPRAS newsletter where Mrs Marita had complimented Indian plastic surgery colleagues and even wondered if the whole world should celebrate July 15<sup>th</sup> as the Plastic and Reconstructive surgery day.

### **PLASTIC AND RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY DAY**

### *We responded and the World recognized*



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**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**



**Prof. Marita Eisenmann-Klein**  
President of IPRAS

Dear colleagues,  
Thank you for allowing me to serve as your President for the forthcoming 2 years!  
I am very happy that your delegates unanimously approved the by-laws changes and elected Nelson Piccolo from Brazil as my successor for the General Secretary position.  
I also want to thank the outgoing and the incoming Board of Directors and EXCO members. So many of them are involved in their national society activities and in challenging training programs and yet they serve IPRAS with great dedication!  
With all their expertise and their transcultural perspectives together we create a stable fundament in IPRAS.  
I am sure you noticed the member services that were introduced during the past 1 ½ years, since Zacharias Kaplantis and his team started to work with us: their enthusiasm for YOU and your work is unparalleled!  
I am delighted that so many of you feel encouraged to share your ideas and visions with us, not only with the Executive Office but also with the Board of Directors and Executive Committee Members and with me personally. We learn from you every day!  
The congress in Vancouver turned out to be an outstanding event, due to the untiring efforts and dedication of our Canadian colleagues. Our congratulations and thanks to them!  
In Vancouver we started a direct communication with our trainees and residents throughout the world. I am happy about their activities. We will soon send out the questionnaire about training conditions worldwide. Please encourage all your trainees to participate! They now have the chance to create a better future for themselves and the next generation.



**The President of the Association of Plastic Surgeons of India, Dr. Raja Sabapathy, has announced July 15th to be THE PLASTIC RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY DAY!**  
On this day, every single one of the 1,300 plastic surgeons in India should operate on one patient for free.  
**We congratulate our Indian Colleagues for this unique initiative**  
**I dream of having a world-wide Plastic Reconstructive Surgery Day with all of YOU on July 15th, 2012!**  
Let us make the world a warmer place. NOW!

Cordially yours,  
  
**Marita Eisenmann-Klein**  
President of IPRAS

*Lets move towards a Global Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Day*

  
**S Raja Sabapathy**  
Your President

If we just continue to do well, then every country will see the advantage of it and follow suit.

Many other associations wanted to follow suit. Indian Orthopaedic Association has followed our example and have declared Aug 4<sup>th</sup> as the National Orthopaedic day the following year. They also gave a call for doing a surgery free by their members that day. They even had special postal cancellation on that day.

I lectured in many countries that year and everywhere the concept was highly appreciated. Sri Lanka wanted to do it. If all of us in India celebrate it with great gusto and the effects are seen then it will easily be followed in all our neighbouring countries.

As members of the APSI every one of us can take this concept to any extent that we dream. At Ganga we are planning a novel project to be announced that day and we will let it be known once the modality is finalized.

Thank you for giving an opportunity to explain it once again. Please do something memorable on that day. Influence the life of at least one person in a positive way that day.

**Dr S Raja Sabapathy**