“THE PRANA HEALS YOUR BODY NATURALLY AND DIVINELY”

Padma Shri Dr. John Ebnezar, The World Renowned Orthopaedician

An internationally renowned Indian orthopaedic surgeon, Dr. John Ebnezar, PhD, M.B.B.S, D.Ortho, DNB (Ortho), MNAMS (Ortho), DAC, DMT, Diploma in Sports Medicine - Australia, INOR Fellow (UK) is known for promoting ‘Wholistic Orthopaedics’, a practice combining modern medical techniques with Yoga for the management of Osteoarthritis of the knees and other chronic orthopaedic problems. Being a Padma Shri Awardee and two times National Award winner including the prestigious Dr. B C Roy National Award, Dr. John Ebnezar also holds several Guinness World Records to his credit including the most number of books written in a single calendar year (103 books). Excerpts from an interview with him:

Childhood and Inspiration to enter medical field

I was born in Bellary; Karnataka, as the only son to my parents along with a younger and elder sister. I came from a very humble background as my mother who was the lone earning member and was a nursing superintendent and my father was a preacher. Our mother’s transfer took us to several schools in Karnataka like Belgaum, Gulbarga and Raichur until our higher secondary education.

I was selected at Karnataka Medical College, Hubli, presently known as Karnataka Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS, Hubli) when I secured good marks in higher secondary examination. At KIMS, I bagged second rank in MBBS. Besides that, I was also the literary champion and inter-collegiate singing champion during my studies. For PG in Orthopaedics, I went to JNM Medical College, Belgaum after which I went to Victoria Hospital Bengaluru for my DNB in Orthopaedics, which was attached to Bengaluru Medical College.

My constant inspiration to enter medical field was my mother Sampath kumari, who advised me not to choose medical field just for the money it offers. She told me only if I had the intention to serve the society sincerely like Mother Teresa and Dr Ida Scudder, who started Christian Medi-
cal College Vellore, I must pursue medical studies. She downplayed all my academic achievements and told me to excel in life as academics is a part of life and not life itself. The decision to choose orthopaedics had also some association with my mother. I used to accompany her during her rounds when I was a kid. I was impressed by the sight of a plaster boy applying plaster on patients. The white glistening plaster fascinated me to a great extent as a kid and inspired me to become an orthopaedic surgeon later in life.

**Academic Excellence - Becoming an Author**

In 1993, I was preparing to take the DNB Exams and as a part of my preparations I used to take classes at Victoria Hospital during the evening and night and many students used to come and attend my lectures. My notes became very popular among the students and they asked me to publish a book in Orthopaedics. Since I was a very junior staff, aged 36 that time and that too a non-teaching staff, I was very reluctant but had to give in to the sustained pressure from my students.

I faced lot of hurdles to publish the book and finally, I had to do it with my own savings and managed an initial print of 1000 copies. However, when it was published, a leading medical books publisher saw it and acquired the rights from me. The rest is history! Currently, ‘Textbook of Orthopaedics’ reached its 5th edition and is a recommended text in most of the medical colleges in India and abroad. Now it has been more than 23 years and I still get many students who tell me how my book has helped them in becoming an Orthopaedician!

Shortly after I got my first book published, my publisher asked me to write another book for physiotherapists. As there was only one book at the market at that time dealing with the subject, they wanted mine to compete with it. I saw that the other book was authored by senior doctors from India’s top most medical centres like All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). I was sceptical initially but went on authoring a book titled, ‘Essentials of Orthopaedics for Physiotherapists’. It also become popular and later, even overcame the other book in sales and is currently in its 4th edition.

A book for nurses was the next book authored by me. Several short books on operative orthopaedics like fractures, first aid, operative orthopaedics etc. were also published during that time. I wrote around 10 to 15 books for the same publisher group. My book on injection techniques for joints went abroad and there it became so popular that it was sold out and was even translated into Spanish language and soon 4 International editions came out. As students we read books authored by foreigners and I had the unique distinction of authoring books that became popular in the Western countries making my Country proud. I’m even told that the pirated editions of my book are in wide circulation among Pakistan and Bangladesh and I purchased a copy of my own book in the Pirated book markets of Bangladesh!! Till date he has authored over 200 books in orthopaedics as a single author, a mind boggling achievement.

**The journey to Padma Shri Award**

It all began with my tryst with the Guinness World Records! It was during that time I came upon a Japanese author who held a Guinness World Record for publishing six books in a year. I accidentally found out that I had authored eight books in a year and hence contacted them. Soon the record was in my name. But in the next year in 2011, my record was broken by another Japanese author who published 52 books in a year. Wondering how one could write so many books, I decided to crack his record by authoring 53 books a year.

I went to another publisher as my previous publisher already had about 10 to 15 books under my title. I told them how I was planning to author 53 books in a year with 100 to 120 pages each. They got a separate editorial team for me in Delhi for doing this and I started working on these books. After I finished writing, I realised that I had contents not just for 53 books but for 103 books!! Two people from the editorial team of the publisher group came to my hospital and stayed with me for one month to finish the work in time. Our book, ‘A to Z in Orthopaedics’ was released in the same year and it become my second Guinness World Record. Now, I have authored...
203 books altogether. I'm glad that all my books are widely read and of great help in the medical realm. All the books are available in Amazon and you can see most of them carry 4 or 5 stars. The intellectual thirst of medical students is very high and it is not easy to satisfy them. My books cover almost all areas of their interest and it gives me immense pleasure that I have been able to keep up to their expectations. Same with a commoner who seldom read books on health, but all my books appealed to them immensely and are best sellers now.

Apart from the record for publishing most number of books in a year, my zeal for preventive orthopaedics and community service, prompted me to create three Guinness World Records for social work and another three for conducting health awareness classes, thus making me the only medical doctor in the World to hold GWR in Academics, Community Service and Health Awareness!

From an Author to a Researcher

Yoga in Orthopaedics - This was also a chance happening. In 2004, a 77-year old lady came to me with stage 4 arthritis. Prior to approaching me, she had taken several treatments with little effect and she had great difficulty moving around. Some even suggested her of knee transplantation. But she refused to do so as she had seen her younger sister, who was in her late 40s, restricted to wheelchair after undergoing a knee transplant. I told her such things happen in one or two cases and it was not fair to compare it with the larger picture. She wasn't convinced and I wondered what I must do to her.

It was during the same time, I went to Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana (SVYASA) Yoga University, Bengaluru, as I was invited by my homeopath friend for his lecture there. He was speaking on the role of Yoga in homeopathy and the significance of incorporating Yoga into homeopathy. Then the idea of incorporating Yoga into orthopaedics dawned on me.

For that old lady, I tried to incorporate Yoga therapy with physiotherapy (modern medicine) and for a three-month period, she went through it under our guidance. She got very good results and had significant pain relief. At the end of the treatment, she had a drastic change and she began to walk normally. After that, I began to use Yoga regularly for other patients and got very good results.

In 2005, I was invited to the British Orthopaedic Association Conference at Birmingham. At a forum on knee replacement surgeons, I presented my work of combination treatment. I was the only person there talking about my ‘non knee replacement’ innovation. But they were all impressed with my talk and I decided to pursue it with further research and studies.

I enrolled as a PhD student in SVYASA Yoga University, Bengaluru, as the first orthopaedic surgeon to join them. We conducted a massive trial on OA Knees (Osteoarthritis) on 250 patients. We divided them into two groups. On controlled study, we did normal treatment like physiotherapy, drug therapy and so on. On the study group, along with this normal treatment plan, we combined Yoga therapy. We compared the results and the results were excellent in the second study group. Patients’ pain, disability index, walking speed, mobility, quality of life, stress, mental issues, diabetes, hypertension – all these parameters came down drastically when compared to the other group. My paper was published in three important journals and I bagged the best researcher award in 2012. Later, the American Acad-
emy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS), who publish the guidelines and recommendations for the Orthopaedic treatment globally, took my three research papers to form their first recommendation for the 11 Non-Replacement treatment options for OA Knees and gave it a strong recommendation. It is the first instance where an Indian researcher’s research papers were used for framing an international guideline. This gave me immense satisfaction for I had achieved an unthinkable milestone as an Orthopaedic researcher and had forced the Western World to take notice of my research, that too on Yoga, for the betterment of the patients with arthritis.

Yoga for Fractures and Spinal Cord Injuries

Yoga is an Indian science that has been tried successfully on lifestyle and non-communicable diseases. Then a new thought triggered me about using Yoga on fractures. This Yoga was not physical Yoga but advanced Yoga called ‘Pranic Energisation Technique’ (PET). The concept behind it is that we all have vital energy in our body called ‘prana’. We use prana to heal our disorders. In short, we use our own internal healing power to heal diseases and I thought why not try it on fractures.

Whatever medical science does, ultimately it is our own body that has to heal. Suppose you are given a tablet for headache, it has to work in your body along with your immune system. If you get a fracture, the doctor might be able to operate and medically correct it. But ultimately, it has to heal by itself or in other words, the nature must heal it naturally.

The PET works like this - You are given an audio file to listen. The instructions in the file ask the patient to imagine the power inside him or nature’s power as a light and to direct it to fracture healing through mental imagination. Also, imagine that the light or nature’s power is stimulating the fracture. This is followed by the regular treatment for fractures. In the results, we saw that the patients who underwent PET were healing faster than the other patients. Suppose regular patients went through 6 weeks of treatment, the other group got healed within 4 weeks with our PET.

That research was so popular that when I published it, American journals were so keen to take up that paper. Apparently, no one has ever done any work on fractures with Yoga. I secured the best researcher award for that research also in 2009. Recently, I introduced Yoga therapy into spinal cord injuries and the results have come out now which are also very encouraging. I have also become the only orthopaedic surgeon in the world to successfully try Yoga on trauma. Similarly another advanced yoga technique called Mind Sound Resonance Technique (MSRT) was tried on chronic neck pain with outstanding results.

Pioneered Wholistic Orthopaedics

My concept of treating patient as a whole and not just as bones and joints is the basis of Wholistic Orthopedics. Each human being is formed of five layers and addressing all these is what it stands for. It is based on the same concept as WHO’s definition of health which says “Health is the complete physical, mental, social well being and not just the absence of a disease or infirmity”, hence the word Wholistic! Yoga forms the core in this concept.

When we talk about Yoga, it is not the Yoga you watch on the TV or internet which is used for this treatment. You should be selective according to the treatment plan devised. We are doing Yoga Therapy and not Yoga Exercise.

We pick and choose the asana according to specific disorders and patient type. It is an Integrated Approach of Yoga Therapy (IAYT) and one needs to undergo training to practice this.

This is how I pioneered ‘Wholistic Orthopaedics’, a practice combining modern medical techniques with yoga for the management of osteoarthritis of the knees and other chronic orthopaedic problems like lower back pain, neck pain, frozen shoulder and modern lifestyle orthopaedic problems etc.

This concept is now gaining worldwide acceptance and have promoted it actively and delivered over 40 orations all over the Globe in a span of just 18 months, apart from CME programs, workshops etc! Many orthopaedic surgeons are now embracing wholistic orthopaedics revolutionising the way orthopaedic ailments are being treated all over.
Geriatric Orthopaedics

I realized we are living longer now due to the increased life expectancy which brings its own share of health problems and had to change the way we treat the elderly. We were not trained to do so and I felt the necessity to serve the neglected geriatric society and thus formed Geriatric Orthopaedic Society of India with the intention of training our orthopaedic surgeons especially the young postgraduate students to handle this vulnerable group.

I have done seven international conferences and have been conducting various CME programs, workshops all over India and abroad to train our fellow orthopaedic surgeons. I’m the first person in the World to form an association exclusively for Geriatric Orthopaedics even though there are other associations for Geriatrics.

My message to the fellow orthopaedicians is to concentrate more on Geriatric Orthopaedics so that they can provide a stress free, pain-free and manageable life for the elderly people. I think, it’s a great cause to pursue!

Awards and Recognition

Following the path lay down by his mother very early in life, much recognition and awards came his way. He is the first Karnataka Orthopaedic Surgeon to have been awarded the most coveted Padma Shri and Dr. B C Roy Award (which incidentally only 15 Orthopaedic Surgeons in the country have won).

He also received the prestigious Karnataka Rajyotsava Award (2010) and Kempegowda Award (2011). Last year, the Medical Council of India awarded him the Silver Jubilee Research Award. Having an array of Guinness World Records to his credit, Dr. Ebnezar is the recipient of more than 280 awards including international, national and state awards. He is the only orthopaedic surgeon in India to give a TED talk.

Beyond these accolades, his life is dedicated to the well-being of the society as a whole. He has shown that if one follows this path it leads to lots of fulfilment, satisfaction and recognitions from the Society which has always held the medical profession in high esteem.

His life is an inspiration to many that, though coming from a very humble background and fighting many odds in life, one can reach the pinnacle of success if one practices right principles and values in life. He is an excellent teacher, author, orator, researcher, writer, publisher, motivational speaker, reformer, social crusader and singer too. He has excelled in all. He feels that he has made his mother proud and dedicates his success to her.

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