

Dr. Perin Kavasji Mullaferoze

1910 – 2005

Mumbai Legacy Project
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Dr. Perin Kavasji Mullaferoze was the first female orthopaedic surgeon in Bombay who devoted her life to serving differently-abled children. The Children's Orthopaedic Hospital (COH), also called the Polio Hospital in Bombay, was recognised in India and internationally because of the dedication and expertise of Dr. Perin Mullaferoze. A compassionate and persevering doctor, she introduced innovative methods to treat cerebral palsy. Dr. Perin Mullaferoze also established the Indian Academy of Cerebral Palsy (IACP) for rehabilitation, a national body in the city consisting of pioneers from different regions and specialities. She was awarded the Order of the British Empire in 1947 for rendering medical services to the state by successfully conducting hundreds of surgeries during World War II.

Born on 3rd October 1910 at Cumballa Hill in Mumbai, Perin Mullaferoze did her schooling in Gujarati till fourth standard and later studied at the Queen Mary School at Byculla (Jam-e- Jamshed 2005). She graduated from Elphinstone College and pursued higher studies in medicine at the Grant Medical College, Mumbai, earning an MBBS degree. She later went to England for further surgical training from 1936 to 1940 and was awarded a Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians (LRCP) and a Fellowship from the Royal College of Surgeons of England (FRCS) in 1938 (Jam-e-Jamshed 2005).

Dr. Perin began her career as a general surgeon at the Cama Hospital in Mumbai from 1940 to 1943. Although she was offered positions at AIIMS and Lady Hardinge Hospital, New Delhi, during World War II, she chose to join the Indian Army Corps in 1943 as a Captain, rising later to the position of Lt. Colonel (Rodrigues 2014, 142). She worked under taxing circumstances at Alipore, Asansol, Ranchi, Dacca and Batavia (Indonesia). Her meritorious service includes the impressive feat of performing 530 surgeries in two months. Recognising her marvellous efforts, her superior officer remarked: "O.I.C. Surgical division has the skill and organising ability of a higher order, sound diagnostician, skilful operator, unlimited capacity for hard work, excellent clinical teacher. In the administration of her division, she showed firmness and ability. I can confidently recommend her for a surgical appointment at a teaching hospital" (Jam-e-Jamshed 2005).



In 1947, she was associated with a voluntary body to rehabilitate post-Poliomyelitis (Polio) afflicted children in Mumbai because no facility existed at that time. Dr. Mullaferoze felt that a proper, well-coordinated setup of professionals was the need of the hour. The continued efforts of this body crystallised in the formation of the Society for Rehabilitation of Crippled Children (SRCC) in 1947. Beginning as a small clinic in a doctor's waiting room for the treatment of children afflicted with polio, under the patronage of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the clinic obtained a grant of land for SRCC at Haji Ali and the Children's Orthopaedic Hospital was established in 1950. Dr. Perin and Dr. KT Dholakia were honorary surgeons working under Dr. Kini. In 1953, Dr. Mullaferoze took over as a Medical Director (Jam-e- Jamshed 2005).

Dr. Perin persevered relentlessly to upgrade the hospital and provide the best facilities to the patients, dedicating her expertise as an orthopaedic surgeon to cases of polio and congenital deformities. By 1956, the number of children with Cerebral Palsy at Children Orthopaedic Hospital increased phenomenally, which led Dr. Mullaferoze to initiate a well-coordinated setup to provide better care for them. She visited the United Kingdom, Japan and then the United States of America. In the United Kingdom, she studied the work of the Bobaths. During an exchange of persons programme, she accompanied a physiotherapist and a school teacher to visit the foremost institutions working for Cerebral Palsy in the United States of America. Among such institutions were the Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, New York and State Rehabilitation Hospital, West Haverstraw (Rehabilitation Record 1963).

Dr. Perin learned of Team Approach in the United States, which she later pioneered in India. In this method, Dr. Perin duly considered each professional's contribution and evaluation, planning a further treatment program for persons with Cerebral Palsy through interactions at meetings and discussions. In 1963, Dr. Mullaferoze initiated the Cerebral Palsy Unit as a pilot project as the Orthopaedic surgeon and Medical Director at Children's Orthopaedic Hospital. The project applied the new knowledge and consisted of a team of experts with Dr. Perin as the head of the Cerebral Palsy Unit. The team consisted of a Neurologist, a Paediatrician, a Physiotherapist, an Occupational Therapist, a Speech therapist, an Educationist, Medical Social Workers, a Nurse, a Psychologist, and a Psychiatrist. The Neurologist was none other than her nephew, Dr. Eddie Phiroze Bharucha. Dr. Perin was the first person to introduce the concept of a team approach in India and Southeast Asia, and the institution was the first multidisciplinary service provider for children with cerebral palsy in India. For names of all members of her team see (Business Standard 2010).



Dr. Perin focused on the growth and development of differently-abled children and family wellbeing. All children got equal attention and care. She helped people from low-income groups with nutritional supplements and also paid conveyance. With her simple, practical and meaningful insights for the families, she instilled a sense of hope, promise and uncompromising care. She innovated splints and surgical techniques and adopted the injection phenol technique to reduce spasticity.

To encourage research and spread awareness about Cerebral Palsy, she conducted regular courses for therapists, held seminars, wrote several papers on Cerebral Palsy, motivated parents to form support groups and wrote their accounts to encourage other parents (Business Standard 2010). It was her dream, combined with the efforts of Dr. Anirudh K Purohit, that led to the foundation of the Indian Academy of Cerebral Palsy (IACP), a national body consisting of pioneers from different regions and experts who shared a common futuristic vision to contribute to the welfare of persons with cerebral palsy and related neurodevelopmental disabilities. Dr. Perin was the founder and president of IACP. Unfortunately, she didn't live to see its inauguration. She passed away in November 2005 at 95 years of age. The IACP was inaugurated officially in Mumbai during the Asia

Pacific Childhood Disability Update held in December 2005. In the words of IACP, "Dr. Mullaferoze was a firebrand inspirational leader in the field who used to describe herself as a battle-scarred veteran in the fight against Cerebral Palsy" (Business Standard 2010). In 2010, in recognition of Dr. Perin's effort to fight Cerebral Palsy, the IACP decided to observe her birth date, 3rd October, as the first 'National Cerebral Palsy Day' to spread awareness about this relatively lesser-known but highly prevalent disorder.

Dr. Perin, a person of diverse talents and interests, was a polyglot, fluent in English, Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi, and Konkani. Alongside her fluency in languages, she was an avid reader, finding solace in books. Despite her appreciation for radio broadcasts, she disliked television. Dr. Perin was also a compassionate animal lover. As a sports enthusiast, she participated in a cricket match that involved a Combined Team of professors and female students competing against the Medicoes. The venue for the cricket match was Grant Medical College ground. The Combined Team beat the Medicoes by 30 runs, and Dr. Mullaferoze led the former team of 15 players to victory (Times of India 1929). Dr. Perin Mullaferoze truly empathised with children with disability and efficiently executed a unique model for cerebral palsy treatment in Mumbai, the first of its kind in Southeast Asia.



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