

HISTORICAL ORTHOPAEDIC ARTEFACTS FACT SHEET No 10

The Forrester – Brown splint



The Forrester-Brown splint was named after Miss Maud Forrester-Brown MD, MS (1885-1970), the first female Orthopaedic Surgeon in the UK, and possibly in the world. The splint was devised in the 1930s, but the exact date is unknown.

The splint was used to treat Developmental Dysplasia of the Hip (DDH) and consists of a metal frame supporting a canvas corset which enclosed the child's trunk and leather cuffs which enclosed the thighs. The child was laid in the corset, the cuffs were laced and the legs bandaged to the metal struts. Some surgeons

preferred this splint to others such as the Barlow or von Rosen splints because, if not fitted correctly they could cause a palsy to the facial nerve. There is no modern equivalent to this device.

In 1916, Sir Harold Stiles asked her to join the staff of the War Hospital at Bangour, near Edinburgh. This hospital was visited frequently by Sir Robert Jones who was a personal friend of Sir Harold Stiles. After leaving Bangour she went to Liverpool. She visited Oswestry with Sir Robert Jones, and also Oxford to see the work of GR Girdlestone, though she was never on the staff of either hospital.

When the opportunity arose to start an orthopaedic service in the south-west of England, Sir Robert Jones supported her application for the post of Orthopaedic Surgeon to the Bath and Wessex Orthopaedic Hospital in 1924.

She established a chain of children's orthopaedic clinics throughout Somerset, Wiltshire and Dorset and to staff the clinics she trained sisters in her own methods, which were influenced by Dame Agnes Hunt. The clinics were devised on the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt model as used in Oswestry, but bore distinguishing features born of her individual ideas.

Sources

1. Barlow TG, Early diagnosis and treatment of congenital dislocation of the hip. Journal of Bone & joint Surgery vol 44B 1962, p 292-301
2. Powell, M. Orthopaedic nursing. 6th ed. Livingstone, 1968, p 74
3. Roaf, R & Hodgkinson, LJ. The Oswestry textbook for orthopaedic nurses. Pitman, 1963, p 186
4. Robinson, PM & O'Meara, MJ. The Thomas Splint: its origins and use in trauma. Journal of Bone & Joint Surgery vol 91B 2009, p 540-544