

Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Bombay Hospital Institute of Medical Sciences: Women's health care at its best!

ABSTRACT

In the late 19th century, the concept of health of women of India was beginning to take shape. Bombay Hospital, initiated in 1951, took up this cause right from the year the hospital was established. It was always the most sought-after institute ever since its inception. The world famous leading gynecologist Dr. V N Shirodkar, legendary consultant Dr. B N Purandare, very innovative Dr. B D Patwardhan, and the pride of women gynecologists, Dr. Segulla Aptekar built the solid foundation of the department, which stands tall even today. A galaxy of star gynecologists was later appointed in the department like Dr Sadhana Desai, Dr Pai-dhungat etc. With stalwarts running the department, hospital started taking students for DNBE, CPS and DGO. In 1990, the department got recognised for the MS course by Mumbai university and later for MUHS(Maharashtra university of health sciences) . It is the only department run by a private hospital for a MUHS recognised course. This manuscript provides a narrative account and perspective of the journey of the department of obgyn at the BHIMS(Bombay Hospital Institute of Medical Sciences).

Key words: BN purandare,healthcare, department, history, VN Shirodkar

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Bombay Hospital, was initiated in 1951 right from the year the Bombay Hospital was established. It was always the most sought-after institute ever since its inception. Obstetric and gynecological fraternity used to look up to this department as the most reputed and advanced department rendering quality care to women. It is indeed an honor for me to head a department with glorious past where stalwarts of not only Indian but also of world gynecology had served.

I became quite intrigued about the history and the remarkable evolution that took place over 70 years. The interest to look back in the history was furthered when I was invited to write an article about department in Bombay Hospital journal. I interacted with the senior consultants several times, took their interviews, to revive their memories of the department. This article highlights the milestones this department achieved based on the information shared by all the senior consultants of the department. I am extremely thankful to Dr. Sadhana Desai, Dr. Pai Ghungat, Dr. Pratima Chippalkatti, Dr. Shashi Goyal, Dr. Prem Sheth (Neonatologist), and Dr. Nitin Pai Ghungat, for sharing most valuable information about the glorious past of this department.

History of women health care

In the late 19th century, the health of women of India was in a very bad shape. There was a very high rate of maternal and perinatal mortality. Women suffered from anemia, tuberculosis, and malnutrition and were in fact a neglected lot. It was in the year 1845 the first medical college in India was started in Mumbai, the Grant Medical College which offered a course in

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modern medicine. It was not open for women doctors for two decades after its inception. Women's health-care movement began thereafter in as late as 1885. It was limited to public hospitals initially.^[1]

Couple of years after independence, many philanthropists came together to initiate a hospital catering to poor and needy. On this background, Bombay Hospital Trust was started for quality patient care for the common man in 1949. Mr. Rameshwardas Birla led the initiative as the first chairman of this prestigious hospital, which was inaugurated by the then home minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.^[2] Maternity care and gynecology services were started from the very beginning, that is, since 1951.

Looking back into the history, four leading gynecologists established the department of obstetrics and gynecology of Bombay Hospital. These diamonds were picked by the Bombay Hospital authorities from the major hospitals across Bombay, namely, Sir JJ Group of Hospitals, Wadia Hospital, and Cama Hospital. They were already working as departmental heads in these hospitals. They helped establishing the department



Figure 1: Dr. V. N. Shirodkar

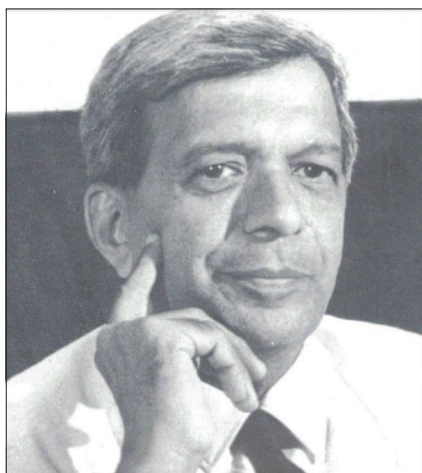


Figure 2: Dr. B. N. Purandare

way back in 1951 and soon it flourished, and was considered as the most advanced department in private sector. The world famous leading gynecologist Dr. V. N. Shirodkar [Figure 1], legendary consultant Dr. B. N. Purandare, [Figure 2] very innovative Dr. B. D. Patwardhan, and the pride of women gynecologists, Dr. Segulla Aptekar built the solid foundation of the department, which stands tall even today.

Dr. V. N. Shirodkar (April 27, 1899–March 7, 1971) graduated from the Grant Medical College, Bombay, in 1923, did his M.D. in 1927, and obtained his F.R.C.S. (Eng.) in 1931. His career began to take remarkable turn after he was appointed honorary obstetrician and gynecologist at the J.J. Group of Hospitals in 1935. He was a surgeon par excellence and unparalleled teaching skills. He was always into innovative surgeries. He devised many surgeries which are popular even today. Shirodkar operation for incompetent cervix in women with a history of repeated second trimester abortions offered a ray of hope for these dejected women.^[3] Two other operations for genital prolapse and tuboplasty were also innovated

by him.^[4] He took an active interest in the family planning program of the country. He was a member of the Shantilal Shah Committee on abortions and was of the view that the indications for abortions should be liberalized in our country. He travelled world over and demonstrated his techniques of surgeries with slides and films which was considered unique those days. In 1960, Dr. Shirodkar published his internationally acclaimed monogram “Contributions to Obstetrics and Gynaecology.” He was recipient of Padma Bhushan in 1960. He was later awarded Padma Vibhushan in January 1971. He presided over the 11th All India Obstetric and Gynaecological Congress in Calcutta in 1961, and Second Conference of the Asian Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecology also in Calcutta in 1962. He passed away on March 7, 1971, after a brief illness. Dr. Shirodkar’s mother died of cervical cancer. His son, Dr. Manohar Shirodkar in 1976, along with his wife, Sudha, founded the Dr. V. N. Shirodkar Memorial Research Foundation, an organization undertakes screening of underprivileged women for cervical cancer.

Dr. B. N. Purandare was a world famous gynecologist attached to Bombay Hospital. He was Dr. N. A. Purandare’s son. He graduated from the Seth G. S. Medical College and KEM Hospital. He later went to London and Edinburgh where he did his FRCS. He was the Dean of the Medical Faculty of Bombay University. He was also Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. He was honorary advisor on maternal health to the Ministry of Health, Government of India. Dr. B. N. Purandare was an esteemed member of the Shantilal Shah Committee, for making policy regarding high maternal mortality and abortions which eventually led to the MTP Act in India [Figure 3]. Dr. B. N. Purandare was the Tenth President of Federation of Obstetric and Gynecological Societies (FOGSI) in 1967–1968. He received Padma Bhushan award in 1972 for his meritorious contribution to the field of medicine in India. He was elected as the First Indian President of the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) from 1973 to 1976, making history in Indian gynecology.

He devised conservative surgery for genital prolapse and was an excellent surgeon with special interest in abdominal cervicopexy, Schauta’s operation, vaginal hysterectomy, vaginal sterilization, and tubal recanalization.^[5]

Dr. B. D. Patwardhan [Figure 4] was known for his maneuver to deliver the deeply engaged head at cesarean section. He published his work in international journal. He did his MBBS from the premier institute of the Grant Medical College and JJ Group of Hospitals and his MD in Obstetrics and Gynecology from the KEM Hospital. The Grant Medical College was fortunate to have him in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology for several years and he retired as Professor and Head of the Department in 1956. Dr. Patwardhan was closely associated with the Bombay Obstetrics and Gynecology Society. He became 13th the president of the society in 1958, which was the Silver Jubilee year for the society. His son Dr. Vasant Patwardhan, a renowned obstetrician and



Figure 3: B. N. Purandare being felicitated by the president of India, Dr. S. Radha Krishnan



Figure 5: Dr. Segulla Aptekar



Figure 4: Dr. BD Patwardhan. January 22, 1900–November 12, 1983

honorary consultant at JJ Hospital, also became President of the Bombay Obstetrics and Gynecological Society (MOGS) in its Golden Jubilee year (1983–1984). His daughter Dr. Medha also chose to become a gynecologist and is an accomplished and renowned obstetrician.^[6]

Dr. Segulla Aptekar [Figure 5] was yet another very renowned consultant working at Bombay Hospital. She was also the superintendent of Cama and Alibless Hospitals from 1964 to 1968.

Dr. Aptekar was MD and FRCOG. She was from Bene Israeli community. Her brother Dr. Sam Aptekar was a Surgeon at G.T. Hospital. After retirement, she went to Israel and the whole family settled in Nazareth. She passed away in 2000 at the age of 90 years. The family gave a donation to cytology clinic at Cama Hospital which was established by her when she was superintendent there. S. Aptekar Visiting Professorship has been established with this donation. She has left behind a large number of students in Mumbai and all over India.



Figure 6: Dr. Sharad Jaghirdar

Dr. Jagirdar [Figure 6] initially worked in Dr. Shirodkar unit and learned great skills from the master. At that time, two units were functioning which were headed by both the luminaries, Dr. Shirodkar and Dr. B N Purandare. She took over Dr. Shirodkar's unit after he passed away in 1971. She established a roaring obstetric practice in Bombay Hospital. Continuing the legacy, Dr. Pratima Chipalkatti took the charge of the unit after her resignation.

Dr. PaiGhungat [Figures 7 and 8] had joined Bombay Hospital as the pool officer with Dr. B N Purandare way back in 1970 and soon became associate consultant in his unit.

He developed excellent surgical skills while he was working with the innovative surgeon, Dr. B N Purandare. Then, he became consultant and had his own empire in Bombay Hospital for many years. He was considered a vaginal surgeon par excellence. He had a long tenure as the unit head after Dr. B N Purandare. He was instrumental in bringing newer advances in the department.

Dr. Shashi Goyal joined as assistant honorary to Dr. Pai Ghungat in late 1984. She took training in ultrasonography

from the USA. She was appointed as Hon consultant in 1995 and has been very actively involved in executive health scheme of Bombay Hospital.

Dr. B N Purandare's legacy was taken ahead by his generation next, Dr. C B Purandare who worked in Bombay Hospital for many years in his unit and continued after his father retired. Interestingly, his third generation Dr. Amey Purandare also worked for a few years in the obstetrics and gynecology department.

Dr. C N Purandare belonging to the famous Purandare family also was working as a consultant for a few years at Bombay Hospital. He achieved great heights and secured many prestigious positions such as president MOGS, FOGSI, editor-in-chief of Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology of India (JOGI), and finally, he achieved the highest honor, the President of FIGO like his uncle Dr. B N Purandare.

India gave three presidents to FIGO. Moreover, two of them have been associated with Bombay Hospital. The

department of obstetrics and gynecology is very proud to have such legacy.

BEGINNING OF SUBSPECIALITY

Infertility

1969 onwards another scintillating star and pioneer of infertility practice in India returned from the UK and joined Bombay Hospital. It was none other than legendary Dr. Sadhana Desai [Figure 9]. She was encouraged by Dr. Shirodkar to join the department and establish infertility as subspecialty. Dr. Shirodkar fell ill soon after and Dr. Jagirdar took over his unit after him.

Third unit was created with Dr. Dadich who was already working in the department and Dr. Sadhana Desai started working in her unit. Dr. Sadhana Desai headed the unit after Dr. Dadich and soon she was joined by Dr. Champa Nariyani and Dr. Satish Tibrewala. Dr. Tibrewala was appointed assistant honorary gynecologist and Dr. Ologist with Dr. Sadhana Desai in 1983, and he focused on infertility work of the department including male infertility. He is the editor a Dr. Ology section Indian practitioner journal.

Dr. Mithu Kothari [Figure 10] joined in 1970 as the pool officer and later was appointed as consultant. She developed intrauterine insemination laboratory.

Around 1985, Hospital appointed a UK trained senior reproductive biologist, Bakhtavar Vajifdar who was doing intrauterine insemination in Bombay Hospital's IUI laboratory under supervision of Dr. Lalit Ambani, head of the department of genetics and reproductive biology.

Dr. Asha Singhal [Figure 11] joined department after she resigned as a teacher from Cama hospital in 1990.

Dr. Prema Kania [Figure 12] joined initially as registrar to Dr. Sadhana Desai in 1990, then clinical assistant and later was appointed as assistant honorary in 2004 and is a very



Figure 7: Dr. Premanand Pai Ghungat



Figure 8: Dr. Pai Ghungat with Dr. B N Purandare

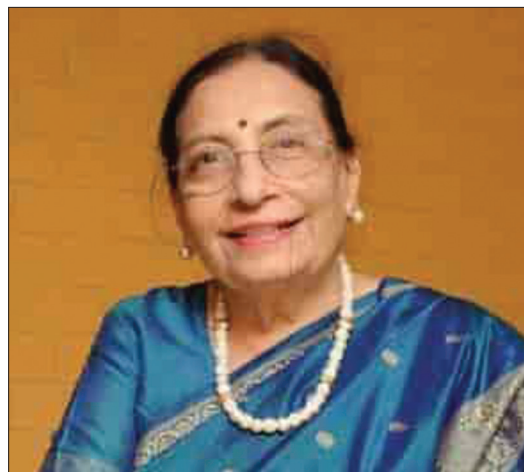


Figure 9: Dr. Sadhana Desai



Figure 10: Dr. Mithoo Kothari with Dr. Sadhana Desai and Dr. Pai



Figure 11: Dr. Asha Singhal



Figure 12: Dr. Prema Kania

active member of the department and has a busy practice. She plays a pivotal role in the hospital.

Dr. Gautam Allahabadia joined as research officer with Dr. Sadhana Desai and was appointed as assistant honorary in 1996–1997. He served in Bombay Hospital for a few years and later left the department. He was elected as the MOGS

president and also held the prestigious post of the editor-in-chief of JOGI of FOGSI.

Dr. Sadhana Desai began doing ovum pickups by laparoscopy in a special operation theater, in 1983–1985. She delivered the first IVF baby of India in private sector, at Bombay Hospital. She has been the honorary physician to Governor of Maharashtra in 2003, she became the president of FOGSI, one of the biggest and prestigious organizations. She is recipient of several prestigious awards including lifetime achievement awards and was honored by FIGO with an award for being outstanding woman obstetrician and gynecologist from developing countries in 2009. She is a teacher par excellence, and source of inspiration for many budding infertility specialists.

HIGH-RISK OBSTETRICS

With constant support from management, senior consultants could develop high-risk obstetrics services which were a novel concept in those days. Department had procured all the advanced equipment for intrapartum fetal monitoring and antenatal electronic fetal monitoring. Obstetric unit had become one of the best in Mumbai. Many complicated cases were transferred to Bombay Hospital for intensive care. Our department started Dr. Aining high-risk complicated patients from all over India.

High-risk obstetrics units cannot function without support of multispecialty services. Hospital had stalwarts working in other departments and had a state-of-the-art intensive care unit (ICU). Very few private hospitals had established neonatal intensive care units (NICUs). Dr. Prem Sheth had experience of managing NICU in Wadia Hospital. She joined Bombay Hospital in 1983 and established a 8-bedded tertiary level NICU on August 25, 1985. To render quality nursing care in NICU, an exchange program was established with British council in Nottingham. It gained wide recognition and lot of *in utero* transfers used to happen to avail of these expert services. It was rated as one of the best NICUs in Bombay.

In recent years, Dr. Shilpa Chaudhari, Dr. Neelima Mantri, Dr. Tejaswini Kamble, and Dr. Arpita Chakraborti joined the department.

ORIGIN OF LAPAROSCOPIC SURGERY

First operative laparoscopy in India was performed in JJ Hospital in 1989. Within a few years, Dr. Prashant Mangeshkar [Figure 13] and Dr. Pratima Chippalkatti went abroad to learn operative laparoscopy and returned back to Bombay Hospital in 1994.

Dr. Pratima used to work as house surgeon in 1975, then became clinical assistant to Dr. Jagirdar, then was promoted as consultant in 1995 after Dr. Jagirdar resigned. Dr. Kunjal Bathija joined in 2005 in Dr. Pratima Chipalkatti unit. Dr. Sangeeta Agrawal also joined the department and started working in the same unit, she left after serving for many years.

Dr. Mangeshkar did a lot of pioneering work in operative laparoscopy, and it opened the new vistas in managing patients. Thereafter, a wave of training programs in operative laparoscopy ensued and many skilled and trained surgeons joined the department. Dr. Nitin Pai joined his father's unit in 2008 and Dr. Varsha Pai joined later in 2010 [Figure 14]. Dr. Nitin continues the legacy of his father. Dr. Nagen Dr. Sardeshpande also joined later and today the Bombay Hospital has many skilled laparoscopic surgeons.

OTHER SUBSPECIALTIES

Amongst other subspecialty, gyne-endocrinology was initiated by Dr. Suvarna Khadilkar in 2013. She took training and a diploma in gyne-endocrinology from the University of South Wales, UK. Adolescent and menopause work took impetus after her joining the department.

Gyne-oncology work was going on for several years with collaborative efforts from medical and surgical oncology teams. In late 2019, Dr. Richa Bansal, a dedicated gyne-oncologist, was appointed in the department.

SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIVE WORK AND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS

Gynecology and obstetrics department was strengthened and empowered to do many high-risk cases and conduct

advanced work like invasive ultrasonography, high-resolution magnetic resonance imaging, and mammography in radiology department. Special mention must be made of Dr. Ambarish Dalal, sonologist, who associated with the department for many years. Medical and surgical oncology department were always powerful. Our quality work was strengthened by highly equipped ICU and NICU, Pathology services, endocrine laboratory as well as state of the art histopathology, highly efficient team of anesthetists available for emergency 24 × 7. Urology department was cooperative as well. The department is grateful to all the heads and their faculty members from other departments.

ACADEMIC GROWTH

Development of Teaching Institute, BHIMS. Hospital got recognized by Mumbai University as the teaching hospital in 1990, and institute got its first ever dean Padmahsree Padmavibhushan Dr. BK Goyal. Under the guidance of Dr. B K Goyal, the teaching departments got recognized. All the departments further developed and flourished under the leadership of his successors Dr. Jayram and Dr. Satish Khadilkar. Dr. Satish Khadilkar continued the legacy of Dr. O P Kapoor, as the editor-in-chief and started the e-journal keeping up with go green initiative which became a boon in the current pandemic times. The department of obstetrics and gynecology regularly contributes many articles to this journal.

Before 1990, the posts done in the department of obstetrics and gynecology of Bombay Hospital were recognized for MD Pune University, College of Physicians and Surgeons for DGO, DFP, and also for DNBE.

After affiliation with university of Bombay and MUHS, the BHIMS started getting students regularly every year. Three students are admitted every year. Moreover, all have had 100% result so far and have excelled in the examinations. In 1990, Dr. Sadhana Desai was appointed as the first professor and head of the department. After her retirement in 2008, Dr. Champa Nariani took the charge, and thereafter, Dr. Suvarna Khadilkar was appointed as professor and head of the department, in 2018 [Figure 15].

Dr. Champa Nariyani was a very strict administrator and headed the department very efficiently. Unfortunately, she left for her heavenly abode after a brief illness in August 2020.

Luminaries such as Dr. Asha Singhal, Dr. Shahi Goyal, Dr. Pratima Chippalkatti, Dr. Satish Tibrewala, Dr. Prashant Mangeshkar, and Dr. Prema Kania were appointed as teachers in the department in various capacities such as assistant professor and associate professors. It is an MCI recognized department since many years, imparting training to students who have taken the flag of Bombay Hospital nationwide and abroad.

Dr. Vijaya Patil was a dynamic faculty member in nineties and practiced for many years. We lost her unfortunately in 2012. She was instrumental in bringing RCOG examinations and



Figure 13: Dr. Pai, Dr. Prashant Mangeshkar, and Dr. Harry Reich, Pioneer of total laparoscopic hysterectomy



Figure 14: Dr. Nitin and Varsha pai

conferences to India. Bombay Hospital was made a center for the RCOG examinations, and she used to conduct the examinations. The MRCOG examination preparation classes were also hosted by the department of OBGYN under her guidance.

Dr. Suvarna Khadilkar, after serving as head of the unit in Cama Hospital, Mumbai, and professor and head of the department in government hospital, Kolhapur, joined Bombay Hospital in 2013 and rendered services as gynec-endocrinologist and associate professor for 5 years and later was promoted to professor and head of the department 2018. She obtained diploma in endocrinology from University of South Wales, UK, and is a recognized teacher for the diploma endocrinology, the UK.

At present, she is the secretary of prestigious MOGS, Deputy Secretary General of one of largest society of professionals, FOGSI, and is honored with the title “editor emeritus, JOGI.” She held many important organizational positions. She held many important organizational positions like Editor-in-chief of JOGI, President, Indian Menopause Society, 2017–2018, President, Association of Medical Women of India, Mumbai, 2011–2016, Chair endocrinology committee of FOGSI, and treasurer of FOGSI. She was also the member of FIGO committee on post-reproductive health 2018. She was invited as council member to participate in FIGO council meeting at Vancouver and Rio, Brazil, and to represent India (FOGSI).

She has published widely with more than 100 publications and editor of 12 books. She has made complimentary copies of many of her books available in the library of Bombay Hospital. She has been awarded many prestigious orations and also delivered more than 500 lectures at national and international platforms. She is recipient of 30 awards including young scientist award, inspiring doctor award of West India, economic times.

Teaching activity took a quantum leap after 2018. Weekly PG teaching activity is going on without break relentlessly. During COVID times, all the faculty members as well as students did not deter and continued the activities with the same zeal and passion as before on a new virtual platform while discharging their COVID duties additionally.

UNIVERSITY EXAMINATION CENTER

The 1st time in history of the Department of ObGyn, Bombay Hospital, was designated the responsibility for convening the

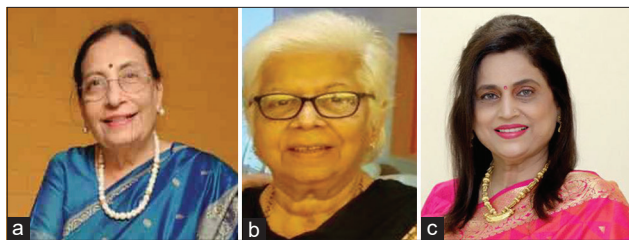


Figure 15: The three professors and heads of the department (a) Prof. Sadhana Desai (1990–2008), (b) late Prof. Champa Nariani (2008–2016), (c) Prof. Suvarna Khadilkar (2018 onwards)

MS examination in 2019 [Figure 16] and consecutively for the 2nd year, 2020 which were successfully conducted despite the challenges of COVID.

In year 2020, Dr. Shashi Goyal was the convenor. Our students secured meritorious position in MUHS University. Dr. Alka Bapat secured second rank and Dr. Sakina Radiowala secured fifth rank in university. Dr. Alka got highest marks amongst students from all the faculties at BHIMS.

All the faculties and students get encouraged to participate in conferences organized at national and international level. Many scientific meets and postgraduate programs are hosted by the department at BHIMS. Some students have also received prizes at the conferences for best paper and also won poster competitions.

Department faculties have published papers in several indexed journals and also in our very own Bombay Hospital journal, leaving a mark on the scientific community.

ORGANIZATION OF CONFERENCES

Dr. Sadhana Desai, Dr. Pai Ghungat, and Dr. Gautam Allahabadia and Dr. Prashant Mangeshkar were very much proactive and organized state of the art conferences at national as well as international level in Bombay Hospital.

Special mention of the international conference on laparoscopic surgery and vaginal surgery which became talk of the town since it was a technological marvel and first of its kind conference in 1997. The delegates actually witnessed the surgeries performed by the US expert surgeons operating in their operative theatres in the US, relayed directly by the satellite collaborating with VSNL. Our Indian delegates could witness the surgeries performed in the US sitting in the most prestigious SP Jain auditorium of Bombay Hospital.

World authorities from different parts of world were invited by Bombay Hospital to demonstrate surgical procedures for benefit of Indian delegates. Prof. Charles Koh [Figure 17] internationally acclaimed surgeon with expertise in advanced laparoscopic endometriosis surgery and fertility microsurgery visited Bombay Hospital for international conference on fallopian tube hosted by Bombay Hospital 1997. Dr. Sadhana Desai was the brains behind this conference.

Prof. Harry Reich [Figure 13] Pioneer of total laparoscopic hysterectomy also visited our department in nineties.



Figure 16: The first batch of students examined at the Department of OBGYN with Dr. Suvarna Khadilkar as the convenor of the examination along with the external examiners



Figure 17: Prof. Charles Koh with Dr. Satish Tibrewala at Bombay Hospital



Figure 18: Happy times in the department

After 2013, Dr. Suvarna Khadilkar has also been very proactive in arranging important conferences and workshops in the Bombay Hospital.

HAPPY TIMES IN THE DEPARTMENT

Our department has always been like a family, sharing strong bonds with colleagues. We also arrange for the recreational activities for our students and faculties to relieve the stress of managing emergencies day and night.

From L to R Dr. Kunjal Bathija, Dr. Shashi Goyal, Late Dr. Champa Nariyani, Dr. Pratima Mittal, Dr. Tejaswini Kamble, Dr. Prema Kania, Dr. Shilpa chudhary Ambekar, Prof

Suvarna Khadilkar, Dr. Neelima Mantri, and Dr. Kunjal Bathija.

Seniors always did handholding of the newer generations, helping them walk on the path paved by the father figures of world gynecology 70 years back to further the aims and objectives of the department, that is, women's health. The department has witnessed the skills of the stalwarts percolating into newer generations. We are sure that the department will continue its legacy in future.

GRATITUDES

Department will always remain indebted to its patients who always trusted the caring doctors, students who are the backbone of the department and of course the ever supportive and encouraging management and the dean of the BHIMS Institute.

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