



Dominican Republic Hand Surgery History

29.01.2024

The society was formed in March 1996. The hand club predating it was established in 1995. The merger took place in 1995 with the name changed to the Dominican Society for surgery of the hand in 1996. The founding members were in their totality fourteen, nine full members, one overseas and four associates. Currently the society has 14 full members. The population of the Dominican Republic is 11.0 Million (2022 statistics). The majority of full members are plastic surgeons, with a minority being orthopedic surgeons. One member is in an exclusive hand surgery practice.

The society secretariat is based at MANOCLINIC "Centro de Cirugía de la Mano y Microcirugía" and the President and Secretary are Otoniel Diaz and Marcos Nunez respectively.

Training

Surgeons aspiring to a hand surgery career in the Dominican Republic join an orthopedic, plastic surgery or general surgery training program (Having already done two or three years in general surgical training). Basic training in orthopedics and plastic surgery includes rotation in hand surgery to provide the opportunity to acquire basic hand surgery skills. An additional one year of training at the end of the residency allows for a higher level of hand surgery training and facilitates an opportunity for a fellowship abroad in the United States, Europe, Latin American or elsewhere.

The Development of Hand Surgery and National Personalities

In the decades of the 1940's and 1950's the only hand care in the country was provided by plastic surgeons and orthopedic surgeons who came from the USA to operate at the military hospitals. They came for short periods of time and were invited by the government of the dictator Leonidas Trujillo. They provided general plastic and orthopedic care to the population including treatment of congenital abnormalities, burns and reconstruction of injuries.

In the 1950's Antonio Dohse MD, who trained in Canada at the Queen Mary Hospital and was probably the first Dominican Plastic Surgeon in the country, provided regular plastic reconstructive surgery at the military hospital. The "La Nacion" newspaper in August 1952 describes his work on tendon graft for hand reconstruction as well as syndactyly releases. He couldn't continue his practice in the Dominican Republic because of the dictatorial government of Trujillo and returned to Chicago, Illinois where he practiced, not as a surgeon, but as a general practitioner.

Years later Dr. Sony Moreta arrived in the country. He had been trained by Dr. Luis Gomez Correa, who is considered one of the most important hand surgeons in Mexico. Dr. Moreta worked at the Dr. Salvador B. Gautier Hospital performing hand surgery procedures for a couple of years, and then he migrated to Puerto Rico.

At the time, orthopedic surgeons who were doing hand surgery included the following: Santo Domingo, Dr. Eliseo Rondon †, Dr. Eros Cruz Sanchez † (with the CARE group) and Dr. Mejia Feliu † (the founder of orthopedic Surgery Department at the Dr. Salvador B. Gautier Hospital), in Santiago (Second largest city in Dominican Republic), Dr. Perez Simo practiced hand surgery.

In 1969 Ivanhoe Baez Comme MD †, a plastic surgeon who trained at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA with Dr. Cramer arrived in Santo Domingo. At the beginning he was integrated in the general surgery staff at Dr. Salvador B Gautier Hospital because of his general surgery background. International surgeons visited the country to offer plastic and hand care. In 1972 Dr. Baez founded the Plastic Surgery Service as part of the surgery department. This service covered general plastic surgery and a vast area of upper extremity care on trauma, burns, congenital and degenerative conditions. Dr. Baez also started the first and only plastic surgery residency program in the country in 1972. This service treated open fractures of the hand and orthopedics treated to closed fractures. The department of plastic surgery at Dr. Salvador B. Gautier Hospital trained two groups of plastic surgeons, one group from 1980 to 1992 and another group from 1995 until now. Both groups have developed a special training in hand surgery, but the second group has incorporated hand surgery and microsurgery training together.

In the 1970's Luis R. Scheker, a young doctor left the country to obtain plastic surgery training in Scotland. In 1982 he was selected for a hand fellowship in Louisville, Kentucky with Dr. Harold Kleinert, after concluding the training, he was selected as an adjunct professor where he practiced until 2016 when he retired on the staff at the C. M. Kleinert Institute for Hand and Microsurgery. Dr. Scheker is considered the father of the Hand Surgery of Dominican Republic due he was instrumental in training of the most hand surgery in the country, Marcos Nunez 1990, Hector Herrand 1995 †, Otoniel Diaz 2005, Silvia Aviles 2012, Gregorio Santana 2014, Maria Herrand 2019, Abel Herrera 2022.

Dr. Nunez, Herrand † and Diaz have been responsible for the replantation of more than 53 hands amputations, including one bilateral hand with a 70% success rate. They are core of hand surgery in Dominican Republic and have trained the new generation of surgeons performing hand and microsurgery in the country. Other plastic surgeons and orthopedic surgeons have dedicated part of their practice to hand surgery following training in Germany, Cuba and Brazil; e.g. Dr. Marcos A Martire Borrell, Dr. Maximo Periche and Dr. Ricardo Gutierrez.

The society sponsored the 1st Iberoamerican Hand Surgery meeting celebrated in Bavaro, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, in April 1998 with participation of more than 100 hand surgeons from North America, South America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal.

Regarding the health centers, the exercise of hand surgery has primarily been carried out in the city of Santo Domingo, the Salvador B Gautier Hospital has been the public health center where more cases have been performed. In terms of private medicine, a large part of the cases was performed at the Santo Domingo CECIP plastic surgery center until 2019 when the MANOCLINIC center for hand surgery and microsurgery opened its doors, a clinic that brings together the professional practice of the majority of hand surgeons of the Dominican Republic.

A transcendent fact is the training of Dr. Silvia Aviles (2018), Kervin Brito (2020) and Otoniel Diaz (2023) in the brachial plexus and peripheral nerve diplomat taught by the University of Coahuila in the city of Torreon Mexico, under the tutelage of the world-renowned professor Dr. Jorge Clifton.

Without a doubt, hundreds of patients have benefited from this training in these areas of knowledge.



Dr Luis Scheker, the father of hand surgery in the Dominican Republic, is renowned for training the majority of the country's hand surgeons.



The Cathedral of Santo Domingo, better known as the Primate Cathedral of America, was declared the first cathedral in the New World in 1546 by Pope Paul III, at the request of Emperor Charles V. This beautiful minor basilica is dedicated to Santa María de la Encarnación.



Punta Cana, located in the east of the Dominican Republic, is one of the most attractive tourist places in the world. Its beautiful beaches, monumental hotels, the warmth of the people make the experience unforgettable for everyone who visits us.