

Editorial

Celebrating “7th April- World Pediatric Surgery Day” Across the world: Role of APSP in Pakistan

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Naming and celebrating specific days allows us to honor and appreciate extraordinary people, important events, and certain common objectives in our lives.[1] Though less often, few associations have designated days like World Plastic Surgery Day and International Day of Surgeons.[2,3] Similarly, UN assembly in 1954 designated 20 November as Children’s Day.[4,5]

No such day was named in Pediatric Surgery until recently. Few pediatric surgery associations started celebrating World Pediatric Surgery Day like India celebrated it on 29th December, 2021 in its few institutions.[6] It aimed at creating awareness for children’s right to be operated by experienced and well trained pediatric surgeons.

In many countries, children are still being operated on by general surgeons, physicians, and even quacks. For example, circumcision- irrespective of its controversial value in certain countries- is being performed by pediatricians, general practitioners, gynecologists, general surgeons, and quacks. Realizing the need to create better awareness among the community, medical fraternity, politicians, and policy makers, the World Federation of Associations of Pediatric Surgeons (WOFAPS) issued the Kyoto Declaration of Pediatric Surgery through the meeting of its executive council in Kyoto, Japan on 3rd May 2001. [7]

The Kyoto declaration stressed as: “Children are not just small adults and have medical and surgical problems and needs that are often quite different from those encountered by adult physicians. Infants and children deserve the very best medical care available. Every infant and child who suffers from an illness or disease has the right to be treated in an environment devoted to their care by a pediatric medical or surgical specialist”. [7]

It also defined pediatric surgeons by explaining their teaching, training, and expertise in the field of pediatric

surgery. It further highlighted the children’s surgical needs, and their right of being operated by trained pediatric surgeons: “In order to provide the best surgical care for infants and children, complex pediatric surgical procedures should be carried out in specialized pediatric centres with intensive care facilities appropriately equipped with modern technology. In addition to the trained pediatric surgeons, these facilities should be staffed with other multidisciplinary pediatric specialists including radiologists, anesthesiologists and pathologists. These specialized centres often provide educational postgraduate training/research and should be staffed 24 hours per day seven days per week.” [7]

Later in its executive body meeting held on 23 January 2023, WOFAPS declared 7th April as World Pediatric Surgery Day (Fig. 1) after the day when Kyoto Deceleration of Pediatric Surgery was formulated. [7, 8].

The current global population of children aged zero to 14 is approximately 2.9 billion. [1] The current birth rate stands at 2.4 per mother globally, reaching as high as 4 in low-income countries. Moreover, the incidence of congenital anomalies is alarmingly high, affecting around 6% of live births, particularly prevalent in low-income countries. [9,10] This confluence of acquired surgical issues and congenital anomalies places an immense burden on pediatric surgeons, who are presently scarce worldwide. The American Association of Pediatric Surgery advocates for a minimum of 2 pediatric surgeons per 1 million population. [11-13]. Unfortunately, this standard is far from met globally, and the shortage is pronounced. According to the 2023 census in Pakistan, where 42.40% of the total population is under 18, there are only 170 pediatric surgeons for the entire country. [14-16] Addressing this shortfall requires an additional 480 to 568 pediatric surgeons. [11, 12]

In pursuit of this critical goal, inspired by the Kyoto Declaration of Pediatric Surgery, a sustained effort is

essential. The Association of Paediatric Surgeons of Pakistan (APSP) emerges as a pivotal force for advocacy. The APSP must persistently work towards this objective, leveraging events like World Pediatric Surgery Day to amplify its message. This globally recognized day provides a unique platform for the international and national pediatric surgical community to unite, voice shared concerns, and raise awareness on common issues. This

occasion demands a multi-faceted approach to foster awareness among the general public, medical professionals (especially pediatricians and general practitioners), influencers in social and political spheres, and governmental decision-makers. Employing well-coordinated strategies will ensure that children in need receive treatment from adequately trained pediatric surgeons.

World Federation of Associations of Pediatric Surgeons



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Figure 1: WOFAP notification of World Pediatric Surgery Day

Designating a specific day for children's surgical diseases is not merely symbolic; it raises awareness, promotes education, and allows collaboration among the community

for supporting the affected and remembering those who have lost their lives. This designated day will help spread information, encourage early detection, and raise funds for

research and support services. It's a way to show solidarity and work towards a world where children's surgical diseases no longer have such a significant impact.

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