

John Benjamin Murphy- “The Surgical Genius.”

MURALI UTHAMALINGAM

John Benjamin Murphy popularly known as Murphy was born on 21st December 1857 in Appleton, Wisconsin, USA [1]. He was brought up in a farm house by his parents who were Irish immigrants and completed his schooling from Appleton High school in 1876 [2]. He used to work in a pharmacy part-time during his high school period and used to remember his mother's advice: “If you are educated, there are no man's achievements which you cannot equal or excel provided you have industry and integrity and are temperate”. On completion of high school graduation he got access to medical text books with the help of local physician and started studying with him [3]. He used to dissect birds and rabbits that were in his farm. After graduating from Rush Medical College in 1879, he underwent internship at Cook County Hospital for year and half [2]. He was a striking figure because of his attire: Strong and tall with short beard and mustache [Table/Fig-1] [4]. He married a Chicago socialite, with whom he developed an animal husbandry near to his farm and carried out many experiments [3].

From 1882, he continued his studies in Europe along with eminent surgeons like Theodor Billroth and Fredrich Arnold [5]. Later in 1884 he started his general practice in Chicago and joined as a surgical lecturer at Rush Medical College. Subsequently in May 1886, he was one among the doctors to be summoned to testify the “Haymarket riot” that took place in Chicago and many labor men surrounded the scene which later led to the tradition of May Day rallies [6].

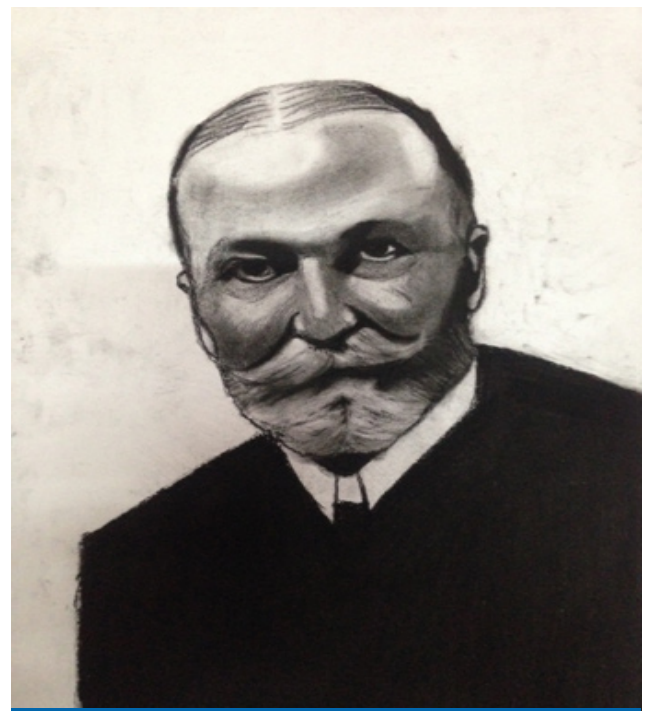
In 1890 he was elected as the Professor of clinical surgery at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Chicago [5]. During the next span of 16 years he held a position at Northwestern University Medical School (1901-1905), worked at Rush Medical College again (1905-1908) and returned back again to Northwestern University Medical School (1908-1916) [2,5]. He was also the chief surgeon of Mercy Hospital, Chicago from 1895-1916 where he conducted clinics and lectures which led to the formation of printed version, popularly known as “The Surgical Clinics of Chicago” and subsequently to “Surgical Clinics of North

America” until 2008 [2,7]. While at Mercy hospital, Murphy was appreciated by the former President of United States (USA), Theodore Roosevelt, for removing the bullet from his body on his assassination attempt in 1912 [5].

Murphy was the first person to suture a severed femoral artery due to a gunshot wound (1896) as well as the first from US to artificially immobilize and collapse the lung in the treatment of pulmonary tuberculosis (1898) [2,5]. He was also a pioneer in bone grafting methods for management of jaw tumors and ankylosis (1899) [2,5]. His other ventures were in neurorraphy, newer innovative methods for surgical correction of prostatic cancer, end-to-end anastomosis of hollow viscera [2] and biliary tract endoscopy (1912) [1].

Murphy's contributions to surgery include: [1, 2, 5, 8&9]

Murphy's Button-Mechanical device for intestinal anasto-



[Table/Fig-1]: Dr. John B. Murphy [10]

mosis (fore-runner for modern stapling instrument).

Murphy's Punch - Tenderness at renal angle in cases of renal abscess.

Murphy's Sign - Classical sign of acute cholecystitis.

Murphy's Test - To elicit rigidity and tenderness in cases of perinephric abscess.

Murphy's Drip - Administering fluids by proctoclysis in cases of peritonitis.

Murphy - Lane Bone Skid - steel instrument for femoral head procedures.

Murphy's Triad - In appendicitis.

In 1902, he was awarded Laetare medal by the University of Notre Dame. Subsequently in 1908, Doctorate of Science by the University of Sheffield, England and also in the same year appointed as First Lieutenant of Army Reserve Medical Corps. Later, in 1916 he was knighted as "Collar and Cross of the Order of St. Gregory the Great" by then Pope Benedict XV [5]. The American College of Surgeon's Association (ACS) has erected a building known as "John B Murphy Memorial Auditorium" in memory of John B. Murphy at Chicago in 1923. Earlier it was in usage by ACS but later in 2006, it was renovated and opened for public events [11]. A school was named (The John B. Murphy Elementary School) to honor him at Chicago in 1924 and still in function as on date [1]. He was later in his career elected as the President of Chicago Medical Society and American Medical Association [1, 12].

He was suffering from angina pectoris for many years due to aortitis which he predicted as "plaques in his aorta after

necropsy before his death [2]. John Benjamin Murphy died on 11th August 1916. So his career spanned in all fields of surgery from general surgery to its allied specialties. He was a man of action with proven legacy. This made him to gain international recognition in the surgical field and to be called as the "Surgical genius of one generation" [2].

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AUTHOR(S):

1. Dr. Murali Uthamalingam

PARTICULARS OF CONTRIBUTORS:

1. Associate Professor, Department of Surgery, IMS / Management & Science University, Shah alam Malaysia.

NAME, ADDRESS, E-MAIL ID OF THE CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Dr. Murali Uthamalingam,
International Medical School / MSU / University Drive / 40100, Selangor, Shah alam, Malaysia.
E-mail: Srimuralihospital2012@gmail.com

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