

Doral reconstructive surgery course creates skilled hands

A two-day course on hand reconstruction surgery drew about 200 orthopedic surgeons and therapists from 19 countries to a specialized training facility in Doral.

BY DANIEL CHANG

dchang@MiamiHerald.com

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Teams of surgeons replaced the radial heads of elbow joints with metal implants during one afternoon session Monday, while therapists gathered in an adjoining classroom and peeled the skin and fat from arms to examine the muscles.

Later, surgeons and therapists would eat lunch in a conference room while watching live video of a thumb joint reconstruction surgery from a nearby medical office.

They came, 200 orthopaedic surgeons and therapists, from all over the world for a two-day conference to study at the largest cadaver surgical training center in the country.

“These are very technical surgeries. You have to practice this before you do it on a patient,” said Dr. Alejandro Badia, host of the conference and owner of Badia Hand to Shoulder Center in Doral, where he performed the thumb surgery.

Badia also is a founder of the Miami Anatomical Research Center, which boasts 40 surgical stations, a 100-seat auditorium and conference rooms.

Through the hand surgery course and the mammoth research center, which he helped found, Badia wants to transform Doral into an international destination for medical education and treatment.

“Miami is a natural for that,” he said.

Indeed, orthopaedic surgeons and therapists from Latin America, Europe, Egypt, Australia and the Caribbean attended the conference, with many saying they would take home the techniques and technologies they learned in Doral.

Dr. Godfrey Araujo, an orthopaedic surgeon in Trinidad and Tobago, was attending the seminar for the second year.

“You meet these people who are at the top of their game, and they're so helpful,” Araujo said of the hand course, which is now in its fifth year. Doctors and other medical professionals are not the only ones networking at the hand surgery course. Many of the lab sessions include hands-on participation by representatives of medical equipment manufacturers, according to the course descriptions.

Beyond what he's learned at the seminar, Dr. Bruno Pietraplana of Peru said he also has built a collegial network with other surgeons, and that they often consult each other and especially Badia via e-mail and phone calls.

“I used to save my worst cases in a box for Alejandro,” Pietraplana said.

Badia specializes in the hands and upper limbs, and Araujo said Badia excels at small joint arthroscopy, or surgery using a camera and needle-like tools inserted through tiny incisions.

But Badia may be too busy to accept many more patients. He said he intends to open an orthopedic emergency room at his medical office, which also includes a post-operative rehabilitation center.

Performing the thumb surgery at his medical office while doctors watched live video of the procedure at the research center, Badia said he enjoyed sharing his expertise with other doctors.

“It's our patients who ultimately benefit,” he said.

At Monday's session for therapists, Sue Michlovitz, a doctor of physical therapy who practices in Ithaca, N.Y., said she was impressed by the research center. An anatomical chart was projected on one wall while therapists gathered in teams at three tables, all hunched over the cadaver arms.

Michlovitz said the lesson will help therapists visualize the muscles they are helping to rehabilitate in patients. She said many physical and occupational therapists work on cadavers only as entry-level students and rarely get a chance to work on one again during their careers.

“These cadavers are more like the real thing,” she said. “When I examine you, I look at you without your skin on.”

Read more: <http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/03/09/1519737/two-day-reconstructive-surgery.html#ixzz0njtoZV4H>