

Bahraini doc has cult status in S. Korea



Medical instruments used for the Endoscopic Lumbar Discectomy

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A Bahraini doctor with a cult status in a foreign country is not some news you hear every day.

The soft-spoken Dr Abdul Gaffar Shaikh Ahmed, an orthopaedic surgeon with Awali Hospital, has scores of doctors in South Korea practising a technique he has initiated.

This was revealed to *DT News* by Korean spine surgery specialist Dr Enum Jin Hwa who was recently in the Kingdom to meet his Bahraini inspiration to conduct a specific keyhole surgery to remove prolapsed lumbar discs.

Endoscopic Lumbar Discectomy is a minimally invasive spinal surgical technique to remove prolapsed lumbar discs. The surgery is carried out under a general anaesthetic and any type of disc herniation can be tackled with this technique without

undergoing post-operative physiotherapy.

"There is a society with 357 doctors practising this technique," Dr Enum Jin Hwa said while he was in the Kingdom to meet Dr Ahmed who has been practising the technique for nearly two decades.

The scope, a medical instrument consisting of lights and lens for minimally invasive surgical techniques, has been used in the knee before, but Dr Ahmed tried out the technique successfully with the spine.

Dr Ahmed came to know about the surgery in 1997 while at the International Society for Minimal Intervention in Spinal Surgery in Switzerland. In 1998, he conducted the first surgery, a historical moment for Bahrain. It was an

emergency case at the Bahrain Defense Force Hospital. A

41-year-old male suffering from acute sciatic pain with impending neurological deficit with the risk of nerve damage was successfully treated in 1 hour 15 minutes.

"News spread that I had successfully used the technique on the spine," said Dr Ahmed.

"Everyone was amazed," he added.

The South Korean connection began in 2001 when Dr Enum Jin Hwa's colleague Dr Yeung Chol Choi attended the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons meeting in San Francisco where Dr Ahmed was presenting the technique.

Fascinated by the presentation, Dr Yeung Chol Choi came to Bahrain in the same year and assisted Ahmed while learning the technique.

"He went back to South Korea and trained Dr Enum Jin Hwa who went on to

popularize the technique in South Korea," Dr Ahmed told *DT News*.

Dr Enum Jin Hwa developed an instrument specifically for the keyhole procedure.

"The procedure is popular among doctors as well as patients," said Dr Enum Jin Hwa.

Dr Ahmed continued to present the technique in various meeting and conferences held in Bahrain, Lebanon, and Egypt yet doctors were hesitant to adopt the technique.

"People were reluctant to follow it, they were afraid to put a scope in the spine," said Dr Ahmed.

"I was disappointed that no one was taking up the technique; this was 18 years ago" he added.

Three months ago, Dr Enum Jin Hwa contacted Dr Ahmed saying how Endoscopic Lumbar Discectomy has gained popularity in South Korea with an official society of 375 doctors practising the

Endoscopic Lumbar Discectomy is a minimally invasive spinal surgical technique to remove prolapsed lumbar discs. The surgery is carried out under a general anaesthetic

technique.

The Endoscopic Society of South Korea has much to thank this Bahraini doctor who is eager to share his knowledge with the larger world.

"I came here to meet Dr Ahmed and discuss how we can further develop the technique to make the patient more comfortable," said Dr Enum Jin Hwa.

The conventional technique to remove prolapsed lumbar disc is invasive with a longer stay in the hospital and takes longer rehabilitation with post-surgery pain.

Today, the keyhole procedure is highly sorted after by patients worldwide due to the quick recovery period and minimally invasive techniques.

"I have performed 3,500 surgeries using this technique in over 10 years," Dr Enum Jin Hwa revealed.

"During the early days we faced minor complications, now we know what to expect and how to prevent it," he added.

Less hospitalization, quick mobilization, 0.01% chance of infection, no physiotherapy and minimal post-operation pain are among the benefits of the keyhole technique.

"Spine anatomy is very complicated; this technique can save muscle and bone as compared to the open

surgery," revealed Dr Enum Jin Hwa.

"The main advantage for the surgeons is the camera clarity during the procedure; the view is magnified 20 sometimes 50 times," he added.

Degenerative pain due to wear and tear is the prominent cause for individuals suffering from back pain, an issue that develops as the person ages.

"But now even the youngsters are suffering from this disc problem," revealed Dr Ahmed.

His youngest patient is only 14.

"Our lifestyle has changed, everything is mechanized, and most of our jobs are immobile, the lack of movement and poor posture weakens the disc," stated Dr Ahmed.

The UAE has launched a globally recognized certification course, known as the Arab Spine Diploma Course, for doctors to study and practice minimally invasive techniques. The course focuses on establishing Arab education standards for a spine specialist and to ensure better quality treatment.

"We have workshops and courses in South Korea to teach this technique," mentioned Dr Enum Jin Hwa.

"Bahrain needs such an initiative like the Arab Spine Diploma Course," urged Dr Ahmed.



Dr Enum Jin Hwa and Dr Abdul Gaffar Shaikh Ahmed

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