

Obituary

Dr Samuel Noordhoff (1927–2018)



Dr. Samuel Noordhoff

Dr Samuel Noordhoff, an American Plastic Surgeon, went to Taiwan as missionary surgeon and he was instrumental in establishing a tertiary care medical institute in Taipei. He the most appropriately given Chinese name Luo Huei-Fu, which means 'Man of Wisdom'. After his administrative job in a hospital, he established the world-renowned plastic surgery department and dedicated himself as Cleft and Craniofacial Surgeon. He ensured that the younger generation of Taiwan doctors rises to provide quality of care at par with the world. He received many civilian and governmental honours for his services.

He did not limit himself to one country. His attention was always to all the areas where cleft care is needed to be established to help these children. He established the Noordhoff Craniofacial Foundation donating his personal money. He was also founding member of Medical Board for the Smile Train, a largest charity organisation helping cleft children across the world. He helped the Smile Train to establish guidelines for providing cleft care and help them to recognise cleft centres across the world to establish cleft care supported by the Smile Train. Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research, Chennai, was one of them.

His love for India was special. He encouraged and ensured to bring out young generation of dedicated cleft and craniofacial surgeons and multidisciplinary cleft centres in India. He supported many different specialists such as surgeon, speech therapist and orthodontist training in Taiwan with Noordhoff Craniofacial Foundation.

He visited India a few times and greatly inspired the young plastic surgeon to take up this speciality. He will patiently and wisely guide the young surgeon to surpass obstacles to provide multidisciplinary services for patients with

weak economic background. As a missionary, his zeal was healing patients physically and in spirit and provided them joy of life.

For me (JM), meeting Dr Noordhoff was like going to pilgrimage.

I (NM) happened to do an fellowship at Cleft and Craniofacial Center, Chang Gung Memorial Hospital, Taipei, Taiwan. I got closely associated with Dr Samuel Noordhoff. He was very meticulous and had great respect for tissue. During my time, we were five international fellows working in that department and had a get together at his residence over the dinner. During that time in 1996, he created an excellent book and video on primary cleft lip repair with his technique of use of turbinate flap and lateral mucosal flap for nostril floor, triangular flap for the vermillion and use of alar transfixation sutures.

Dr SR Tambawekar was in the process of forming an Indian Society of Cleft Lip Palate and Cranofacial Anomalies (ISCLP and CA). To get all multi-speciality cleft teams involved, we conducted First National Update on Cleft and Craniofacial Surgery (NUCC) in 1997 at Bombay Hospital. Dr Noordhoff and Dr Philip Chen were the faculty and they demonstrated cleft surgeries and delivered lectures. I was organising secretary of the NUCC, and he kindly gifted me the book and a video cassette. At that time, our society ISCLP and CA was founded and he witnessed the event. He was instrumental in supporting Indian Fellowes through his Noordhoff foundation.

He was a Millard Orator during the ISCLP and CA conference in Chennai conducted by Dr Jyostna Murthy [Figure 1] under the president ship of Dr Hirji Adenwalla. He was instrumental in training Dr Yu, Ray Chen and Phillip Chen, who continued his legacy of treating cleft patients.



Figure 1: Dr Noordhoff with Dr Jyotsna Murthy at Chennai (2003)

We lost a beacon of selfless medical services for needy individuals. He was strongly supported in this endeavour by his wife Lucy and children.

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Access this article online	
Quick Response Code: 	Website: www.ijps.org
	DOI: 10.4103/ijps.IJPS_267_18

How to cite this article: Murthy J, Mokal NJ. Dr Samuel Noordhoff (1927–2018). Indian J Plast Surg 2018;51:348-9.