

Case Study 5: “Plastic Surgery – Making A Difference Where It Really Matters”

In 2013, the British Foundation of International Reconstructive Surgery and Training or BFIRST was set up as the official charity arm of our National Plastic Surgery Association (BAPRAS). The aim of BFIRST was simple: to coordinate and pioneer new efforts to teach plastic surgery in developing countries to local surgeons, so that one day they can teach their own. At present, BFIRST has 10 active projects in countries like Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Nepal, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Zimbabwe.

NHS Lothian involvement:

Wee Lam, Consultant Plastic Surgeon in Edinburgh, was appointed the President of BFRST in 2015. He has been active in Cambodia since 2013 and has established the country’s first brachial plexus unit at the Children Surgical Centre in Phnom Penh. In 2015, we hosted a BFIRST fellow in conjunction with Birmingham.

In 2016, Ken Stewart and team visited the Viet Duc hospital to teach ear reconstructive surgery. We also hosted a Vietnamese fellow in conjunction with Leeds.

In 2017, Neil Cahoon visited 5 hospitals in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to plan an orthoclastic hand course and curriculum. The first course will take place in March 2019 and we are hosting an Ethiopian Plastics fellow at the Edinburgh Hand unit.

BFIRST works uncompromisingly on the principle of education, and the Edinburgh Plastic Surgery unit in NHS Lothian is keen to support the work with present and future projects.