LITTLE HANDS

GANGA MEDICAL CENTRE & HOSPITALS PVT LTD

GANGA LITTLE HANDS

An Initiative of Plastic & Hand Surgery Department

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The Power of a New Thumb

Dedicated to Increasing Awareness, Understanding, and Early Action in Congenital Hand Conditions

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GANGA LITTLE HANDS is an educational initiative by the Department of Plastic, Hand and Reconstructive Microsurgery and Burns of Ganga Hospital, Coimbatore, to share knowledge about Paediatric hand conditions. This is a monthly bulletin and was first started in August 2024.

It has a compilation of various hand conditions treated by us. Little Hands is for anyone and everyone. It is not for surgeons only. The technical tips, 'Did you know?, Picture Gallery, Hand vignettes, Real Life Stories and the 'Clinician's corner' might be interesting to all the readers.

Scan Me

To read all the issues of Little Hands

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Editorial

Welcoming the World to Coimbatore

We at Ganga Hospital had the proud privilege of hosting the 13th World Congenital Hand Symposium in the last week of February, 2026. The efforts to conduct this 'once in three years congress', started the moment we won the bid to host it during the previous congress held in Minnesota, USA in 2023. Opportunity to conduct it in Coimbatore was special because this event is being held for the first time in this part of the world.

We had over 200 delegates and of them 131 were from overseas and that they were from 30 countries gave us great satisfaction. The goals of any medical conference are to bring together thought leaders, who could help sharpen the skill levels and inspire the next generation, networking, interactive learning and creation of fond memories of meeting old friends and gaining new ones. Judging from the feedback we received from the delegates, I think we scored well in all the fronts.

On a personal note, this meeting while it gave us great satisfaction for the journey travelled, it reminded us of the things that need to be done to make the children with congenital hand differences lead a normal life. We remain ever grateful for the delegates for showing us the future.

Dr S Raja Sabapathy
Dr Monusha Mohan
(Editors)

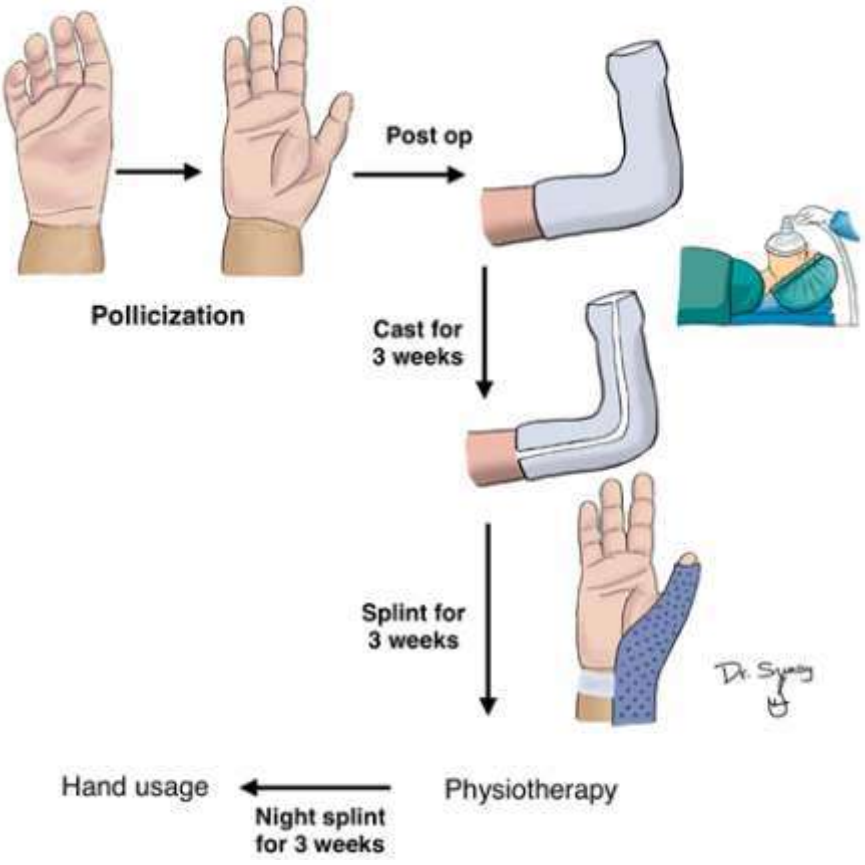
Clinicians' Corner

Beyond Pollicization

The World Symposium brought together surgeons from around the globe who work tirelessly to care for children born with congenital hand differences. Through the interactions and the work shared, it became clear that our commitment extends far beyond surgery.

Radial longitudinal deficiencies including thumb hypoplasia received the most attention; be it in the number of scientific abstracts received and accepted or be it in the quality of discussions that occurred. Pollicization is one surgery that found its place in all the main events- Starting from the Opening Keynote Lecture by Dr Ann van Heest. The technique and some real-life encounters of Dr Terry Light with Dr Buck Gramcko made the Landmark paper session interesting. Dr Scott Oishi chose to talk about the technique for his Keynote lecture. Expert panel discussion on the same were "both entertaining and informative", according to Dr Jessica Steele. Needless to say, Legends in the Legacy Hall were mostly proponents of this remarkable procedure!

We all agreed on the fact that the first consultation is important in building a rapport with the child and the parents. In this AI era, where parents already read about what their child might have, the discussion includes the reason for the malformation to the steps of pollicization. We follow the '3 week' postoperative protocol where the POP cast after pollicization is retained for 3 weeks followed by 3 weeks' of thermoplastic splinting and then, 3 weeks of night time splinting.



A Timeline of Thumb Transformations

"From toddlers to teenagers: Two decades of Pollicization at Ganga."

Did you know?

Apert Syndrome: First Described by the French Pediatrician Eugène Apert

It was the French pediatrician Eugène Apert who described a striking combination of features affecting the skull, hands, and feet in his paper *"De l'acrocephalosyndactylie"*. He proposed the name acrocephalosyndactyly to describe this entity that is now recognized as Apert syndrome. The affected children are characterized by a tall, prominent skull that is flattened at the back and fusion of the fingers and toes. Apert emphasized that, although these children were born with visible differences, the condition was compatible with life.

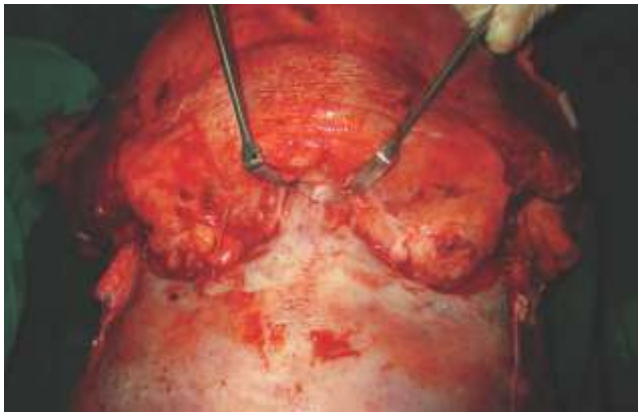
His report was largely based on a single child he had examined when he was an intern. This was supplemented by a review of eight additional cases gathered from the existing literature.

The story of Apert highlights the importance of recognizing clinical associations, carefully reviewing the literature, and sharing observations through publication.

Lee, D.S.B.; Chung, K.C. Eugène Apert and His Contributions to Plastic Surgery. Ann. Plast. Surg. 2010, 64, 362–365

One of our children with Apert Syndrome. She required multi-disciplinary care

Four digit hand with better function after syndactyly separation



Fronto-orbital Advancement

Cleft Palate Closure

Apert syndrome has influenced many areas of medicine because caring for affected patients requires expertise from several specialties. Its treatment highlights the importance of a collaborative approach, where professionals from different medical disciplines like Neurosurgery, Pediatrics, Ophthalmology, Otolaryngology, Oral maxillofacial surgery and Plastic/Hand surgery, work together to manage the condition comprehensively.

The child benefitted from our comprehensive care

Another child with Apert hands with excellent results after staged 5-digit reconstruction

Hand Vignettes

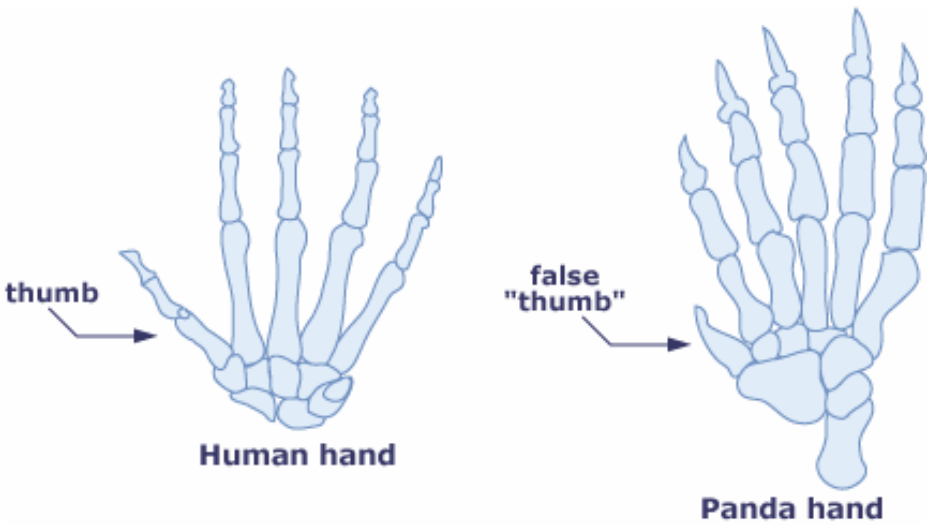
Function Does Not Need Perfection, Just Intelligent Design

The Giant Panda spends most of its time doing one thing-eating bamboo. But bamboo is tough and slippery. Panda's paw has five fingers but does not have an opposable thumb!

So how does it manage to hold and strip a bamboo with precision?

Nature found a way around, instead of evolving a true thumb like primates, the panda developed a "false thumb'. It has a wrist bone, a radial sesamoid bone that act like a thumb. It is not a real digit with muscles and joints.

But by shifting and repurposing an existing structure, the panda gained something priceless: grip! This one evolutionary twist allowed it to feed efficiently and ensured its survival.



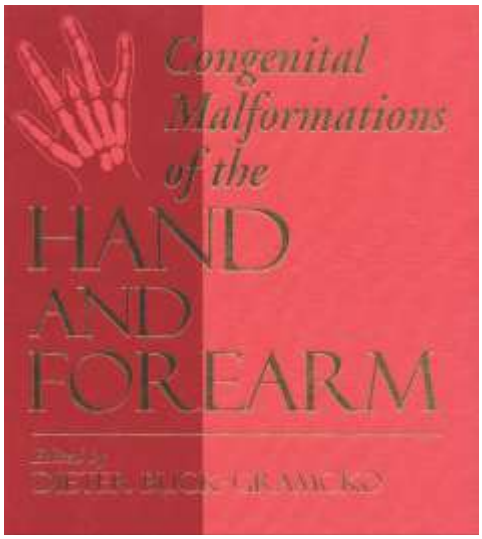
Like nature, we too design a new thumb! Through **'Pollicization'**, we repurpose the index finger – we reshape and reposition it to act like a thumb, just like the Panda's solution. The result? The new thumb can grasp and hold anything. For a hand surgeon, it is among the most gratifying operations; transforming a hand that can only grasp like a hook into one capable of nearly normal function.

Legends in Congenital Hand Surgery

Dieter Buck Gramcko
Germany / 1927-2012

Landmark Contributions

- Founded the first independent Hand Surgery Department of Germany in Hamburg in 1963
- The 'Thumb doctor'- he devoted particular attention to children born with limb deformities after the thalidomide tragedy between 1959 and 1961, and performed over 500 of these specialized operations. Famous for his publications on Radialization and Pollicization procedures.
- Authored 168 articles and 99 book chapters, and many more...
- His eponyms include the dorsal rotation-advancement flap (first web release), flaps for lateral nail fold reconstruction, the wire bender & tendon retriever instruments
- Founded the German Journal for Hand, Micro and Plastic Surgery and was its editor for more than 30 years
- Established the Societies for Hand Surgery in German-speaking countries, was the founding member of the European and International Hand Surgery Federations
- 'IFSSH Pioneer of Hand Surgery' Award in 1998.
- A great mentor – it is said that he did ward rounds mainly to inspect the casts!



This internationally acclaimed book by Buck Gramcko is a historical and educational reference for many of us.

Dr S Raja Sabapathy with Dieter Buck Gramcko

"In my opinion, an editor should use basic scientific terminology as correctly as possible, including the avoidance of words that are simply wrong or have a double meaning"

Help us heal Little Hands | Make a donation

It is difficult to imagine what the parents experience when they find out in the labour room that their newborn baby has a congenital limb defect. The family often feels devastated as their hopes fade. Most of the limb anomalies have a surgical solution that is aimed at making the hand to function in a better way.

Globally, congenital anomalies or birth defects affect 2-3% of births. In India, 1-3 out of 100 babies born are with birth defects. Though musculoskeletal anomalies are the most common defects seen, rarely we find major initiatives aimed at managing these defects. A lot of regional and international proposals are directed at treating and supporting children with congenital heart diseases and orofacial defects like cleft lip/palate. Though isolated congenital limb defects are not life threatening like the cardiac and craniofacial anomalies, they are disabling and lower the quality of life.

You can make a tax-deductible donation today and transform the lives of these kids by giving back their childhood.

To make a donation, please write to rajahand@gmail.com

At Ganga, we have a specialized team of doctors to provide comprehensive care to these children. One of the basic surgical principles of congenital hand surgery is to correct the deformities before the child attains school going age. Often these defects are bilateral and involve multiple fingers, necessitating staged surgical procedures. We have highly experienced Paediatric anesthesia staff to support the surgical team. The associated anomalies are taken care of by our Pediatric orthopedic, spine, maxillofacial and cardiac teams. Ancillary services like physiotherapy, nutrition and speech therapy are also available.

Project Eklavya - A Joint Initiative of Rotary E Club of Metro Dynamix and Ganga Hospital

India is witnessing an epidemiological transition from communicable diseases to non-communicable diseases. According to March of Dimes report (2006), 6-7 per 100 new born babies have birth defects. When more focus is on new born survival, we fail to pay attention to the quality of life of these children born with defects. When a child with congenital hand deformities survives and grows up, it is not just their hand function that is affected, their self-esteem and emotional well-being are too deeply impacted.

A Project for children with Congenital Hand Deformities

Musculoskeletal defects are the second most common birth defects, however initiatives to help children with hand anomalies are rare. Project Eklavya was launched by the Rotary E club of Metrodynamix in collaboration with Ganga Hospital, Coimbatore, on 06.07.2025. With this initiative, we try to fill the gaps in care and support of these children like, paucity of insurance coverage for children with birth defects, multiple limb involvement, syndromic associations that increase the financial burden, multiple stages of surgeries and post surgical rehabilitation. We had our first beneficiary last month.

Project Eklavya provides free or sponsored surgeries for children with congenital hand deformities

For more details, log on to **https://eklavyachildren.com/**

Stay Connected

To get updates about our services for children with hand disorders, to grab the future issues of the monthly bulletin and to know what the department of Plastic, Hand and Reconstructive Microsurgery and Burns offers scan the code.

To make Donations

Account Number	:	1120115000010920
Account Name	:	Ganga Plastic Reconstructive & Microsurgery Trust
Bank Address	:	577, Oppanakara Street, Coimbatore-641001
IFSC Code	:	KVBL0001120
Swift Code	:	KVBLINBBIND

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