MEDIA RELEASE

Growing skeletal implants for the treatment of sarcoma: because size matters!

Friday 25 August, 2017

Limb-sparing surgery, also called limb salvage, is often the goal for surgical treatment for malignant bone and soft tissue tumors (sarcomas) of the extremities. The procedure involves the removal of the tumor without the need for amputation.

In the paediatric population, an often necessitated aspect of limb salvage surgery is joint sacrifice. This will also mean the loss of a growth plate of the bone. As such, limb length inequality is a common issue in this setting, according to Orthopaedic Surgeon and 2014 recipient of the RACS Marjorie Hooper Scholarship, Dr Luke Johnson.

“Limb length discrepancies are particularly problematic in the lower limbs, due to the need for ambulation and mobility”, Dr Johnson said.

“Due to the growth of patients in the paediatric population, extendable or growing implants have been developed in a couple of centres globally.

“The evolution of these implants has gone from invasive devices, which required re-operation to affect lengthening of the implant, through several stages to now non-invasive growing implants.

“Due to this sequential improvement in implant design, limb growth has moved from the operating room to the outpatients' department,” he said.

At this year’s combined Annual Scientific Meeting, to be held at Perth’s Pan Pacific Hotel, Dr Johnson will present his findings in this area having returned from the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in London.

“The Sarcoma and Bone Tumour Unit at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in London, where I completed the majority of my scholarship, is a leader in the implementation of these devices and their development,” he said.

Dr Johnson will present clinical studies and outcomes of the non-invasive growing implants, and their evolution, along with case examples of how this technology is deployed in clinical reality, to more than 100 Fellows, Trainees, International Medical Graduates and surgical Associates who will attend the event from 25 August 2017.

For more information about the 2017 joint Annual Scientific Meeting of the Western Australian, South Australian and Northern Territory Regions of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons please visit: https://www.surgeons.org/about/regions/south-australia/#meetings

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