

In this edition of Dartmouth Lifestyle we interview consultant orthopaedic surgeon Mr Ben Holroyd and discuss the new technology used in today's procedures and that his secret ambition is to be a cricket commentator...

Mr Holroyd is a consultant trauma and orthopaedic surgeon based in Plymouth. As well as providing a comprehensive range of paediatric, young adult hip and hip replacement surgery, he is also experienced in arthroscopic and computer guided knee replacement surgery.

How long have you been working as an orthopaedic surgeon and why did you choose this area of expertise?

I specialised in orthopaedic surgery in 2004, having completed my basic surgical training in Nottingham, London and Western Australia. I took up my consultant post in 2010.

The technical aspects of orthopaedics with its practical solutions to surgical problems, appealed to me as a medical student. Consultants who were enthusiastic about their specialty and were personable clinicians who I respected and sought to emulate reinforced this.

Who was your most inspirational teacher?

Whilst on fellowship at the internationally renowned Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto in 2009 I had the great privilege to be taught by the now late Dr Robert Salter. He was one of the most influential surgeons of the modern era, not just in his chosen field of paediatric orthopaedics, but also recognising the importance of research to drive surgical advances and patient care.

Our hip joints are so fundamental in the way we move. They can be the cause of other problems. How do you diagnose this?

90% of problems can be diagnosed from the presenting symptoms alone. Clinical examination reinforces these diagnoses, while investigations in the form of X rays or more involved CT and MRI scans confirm them.

Occasionally an injection of local anaesthetic is a helpful diagnostic tool and can direct further treatment options. Suitability for more extensive procedures such as hip replacement is often assessed in this manner.

You are experienced in arthroscopic and computer guided knee replacement surgery can you tell us more about these procedures?

Arthroscopic surgery is minimally invasive, can usually be done as a day case, and is most commonly used to treat knee injuries acquired from sports or other outdoor pursuits.

Computer guided knee replacement relies on the technology used in your children's Wii computer games! It enables me to implant the prosthesis in the most accurate position, probably the single most important factor in the durability of the implant.

Are there any treatment developments on the horizon?

There is a current move towards customized total hip and knee replacements. Traditionally "off the shelf" implants are selected intra-operatively to match your anatomy as closely as possible.

Advances in software now enable us to scan you pre-operatively, for a prosthesis to be manufactured to fit your unique anatomy.

How does the way in which we live in early life affect our joints in later life?

A balanced diet and regular exercise have multiple benefits to our bodies, not just our bones and joints. In my paediatric clinics, other than inherited joint problems such as hip dysplasia, the greatest problem that I encounter is childhood obesity. The benefits of exercise far out way the risks of



any perceived joint problems in later life.

We understand that you are a keen triathlete and open water swimmer, where do you train and swim?

I usually run around the lanes near home, cycle on Dartmoor and head to the North Cornish coast for swimming. The swim leg is by far and away my favourite event; I'm a hopeless runner! Looking back at the cliffs and beaches from the water is incredibly relaxing; the perfect release from the rigours of work.

Do many triathletes suffer from orthopaedic problems?

Unfortunately like all athletes, triathletes can suffer a vast array of injuries. The varied nature of the sport however is beneficial as different muscle groups can be exercised or rested depending on injury pattern.

Triathlon is the fastest growing sport in the UK, particularly amongst mid life crisis males - the group probably at greatest risk from any sporting injury!

Is there a country you would like to visit and why?

I'm an avid cricket fan and would love to follow a test series in Sri Lanka. I still have ambitions to be a pundit on the Test Match Special commentary team, although lack of pedigree in either cricket or journalism means it will remain a pipe dream!

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