



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

NATIONAL HOSPITAL OF ODONTO - STOMATOLOGY IN HO CHI MINH CITY

## 50 YEARS ANNIVERSARY OF BARSKY UNIT (1969 - 2019)

### PERSONAL HISTORY



- Dr Arthur Barsky, Jr. was born January 7, 1899, in New York City to a family already well versed in the lexicon of the medical world.
- His father was a prominent cardiologist, instrumental in the founding of Beth Israel Hospital in New York.
- Growing up, Arthur would often accompany his father on house calls, and these early experiences likely influenced his later career choices.

- At the end of the 1960s, Dr Barsky felt compelled to use his experience in global surgery to help the Vietnamese care for their injured children.
- Together with Thomas Miller, a lawyer, Dr Barsky formed Children's Medical Relief International (CMRI) in 1966, which would become the organization through which Dr Barsky would launch a unique and wide-reaching project for global plastic surgery.



Mr Thomas Miller



Dr Arthur Barsky



- Under the auspices of CMRI, Dr Barsky conducted a needs assessment for reconstructive surgical care in February 1967, touring district hospitals and health facilities from Hue southward to Saigon.
- He discovered a significant burden of war injuries, congenital and acquired anomalies including cleft lip and palate, noma deformities, and scar contractures. The immense need for essential reconstructive surgical services among children in Vietnam was evident. There were no advanced hospitals to care for the sick, nor were there any plastic surgeons in the country.



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### BARSKY UNIT IN SAIGON

Soon after their survey, Barsky and Miller developed a 3-fold mission:

- (1) to establish a plastic surgery treatment program for the children of Vietnam
- (2) to develop a rigorous training program for Vietnamese surgeons, nurses, and paramedical personnel.
- (3) to build a modern hospital facility in Saigon.

Barsky welcomed multinational and interdisciplinary partnerships.

The ultimate goal, though, was the eventual complete transfer of the facility to the Vietnamese whom they had trained



Barsky Unit, Hospital of CMRI Center, Saigon



FIG. 1. The newly completed CMRI Plastic & Reconstructive Surgical Center in Saigon, Vietnam. It was named "the Barsky Unit" by the Vietnamese Minister of Health.

- Construction of the Unit began in 1967. The CMRI Plastic and Reconstructive Surgical Center was opened in July 1969. It became the first permanent structure dedicated to the reconstructive surgical care for the Vietnamese people and the only modern plastic surgical unit in Vietnam.
- The Barsky Unit included 3 operating rooms, a recovery room, X-ray and pharmacy departments, and 54 dedicated surgical beds.
- Combined with the convalescent center, the entire 164 surgical bed complex constituted what was perhaps the largest dedicated plastic surgical unit in the world at the time.



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### BARSKY UNIT IN SAIGON

Commensurate with Barsky's mandate that the Unit becomes integrated into a locally run and staffed health network, he established a system of referrals that addressed the reconstructive surgical needs of children in both Saigon and in the remote countryside. Surgical cases were captured by a number of district screening clinics in over 29 provinces and hospitals around Saigon.



*Pilot unit team members (l. to r.) Arthur J. Barsky, M.D., from the United States, Isaac Kaplan, F.R.C.S., from Israel, and George Ennis, F.F.A.R.C.S., from England, with Vietnamese head nurse.*

Barsky maintained an insistence on running the Unit and its collaborative educational campaign with an eye to eventual self-sustainability. Under his direction, the international surgeons and nurses were consistently reminded that it was better to spend more time on teaching and on the transfer of surgical skill to the Vietnamese physicians





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## BARSKY UNIT IN SAIGON

- By December 1969, the clinical success of Barsky Unit was apparent. Collaboratively, the international and Vietnamese surgeons were performing over 50 surgical procedures for children each week.
- From 1969 to 1972, the Unit treated over 4000 children.
- By April 1975, over 1200 children were being treated annually.



Phan Thi Kim Phuc - "The Napalm Girl", was treated in Barsky Unit



Dr Barsky died in Hospital de la Seyne-sur-Mer in southern France in 1982. And his works remains influential today for the field of global plastic surgery.

In 1980, Barsky Unit was renamed into Institute of Odonto-Stomatology, which included Outpatient section (Region 36) and Inpatient section (Region 52) on the ground of Cho Ray Hospital.



In 1997, Madelein Albright, the US Secretary of State, had an official visit to Vietnam. She visited Institute of Odonto-Stomatology and appreciated the humanitarian surgical activities here.



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NATIONAL HOSPITAL OF ODONTO - STOMATOLOGY IN HCMC  
QUALITY - SAFETY - EFFICIENCY - HUMANITY



National Hospital of Odonto – Stomatology has performed more than 30.000 surgical treatments for children with cleft deformities.



In May 2018, The Comprehensive Cleft Care Center was opened at 4th Floor - NHOS. This is the first center at Vietnam. Cleft patients have been treated follow the international comprehensive procedure, including prenatal counselling, nutrition education, plastic and reconstructive Surgical, phonetic therapy, orthodontic Treatment,...