

John G. Birch MD, FRCS(C) was born in Windsor Ontario Canada. The oldest of five children, he moved to Detroit Michigan at the age of two, returning to Windsor at the age of twelve. After completing a degree in Honours Biology at the University of Windsor, he attended medical school at the University of Western Ontario (now Western University) in London Ontario. A rotating internship at the Ottawa Civic Hospital was followed by four years of orthopedic surgical training in the University of Ottawa Division of Orthopedic Surgery. After successfully passing the written and oral examinations of the Royal College of Surgeons of Canada (granting the FRCS(C)) in the Fall of 1980, he completed six months of travelling fellowship (University of Florida Shands Hospital (Gainesville FL); Newington Children' Hospital (Newington CT), and the A.I. Dupont Institute (Wilmington DE)), followed by a one-year fellowship in pediatric orthopedic and scoliosis surgery at Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children (TSRH) in Dallas. He returned to Ottawa in 1982 to join the orthopedic staff at Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO). He was invited to join the full-time staff at TSRH, beginning in September 1984.

He practiced as a full-time general pediatric orthopedic surgeon at TSRH where he also served as Medical Director of Ambulatory Care and Assistant Chief of Staff until retiring from direct patient care January 1, 2015. Since then, he has remained active as volunteer consultant medical staff (TSRH) and Adjunct Professor of Orthopedics, University of Texas Southwestern Medical School (UTSW) teaching TSRH pediatric orthopedic fellows and UTSW orthopedic residents; participating in clinical research programs; and providing patient management advice.

Mesmerized by Professor Ilizarov's presentations at the 1988 Tachdjian leg lengthening pre-course, he enrolled in a one-week introductory course to the Ilizarov Method conducted by the Orthopedic surgeons of the Ospedale Generale di Lecco, and returned one year later with his family to spend a further six weeks learning from those talented surgeons.

Expertise in the small patient-centered program Dr. Birch established at TSRH with the support of his colleagues and administrators was exponentially increased by the addition of Drs. Mikhail Samchukov, Marina Makarov, and Alex Cherkashin from the Ilizarov Institute in Kurgan between 1990-1993. With the additional talents of David Ross, Hong Lin, and Dr. Mauricio Delgado, the "TSRH Ilizarov team" developed an early (pre 6-strut) computerized deformity correction planning system; an intraoperative peripheral nerve monitoring program for both upper and lower extremities; a pneumatic wire tensioner; and modifications to traditional Ilizarov and hexapod circular external fixator systems. Professionally speaking, he is proudest of establishing an "Ilizarov clinic" supported by the nursing staff and psychologists at TSRH, which was dedicated to patient education, care, and support through the often-arduous journey of limb lengthening in a pediatric population. He was the first surgeon in North America to insert the Fitbone™ motorized intramedullary lengthening nail, under FDA Compassionate Use approval, with the support and guidance of TSRH, lifelong friend and colleague Mr. Bruce Foster, Wittenstein Intens™, and Professor Rainer Baumgart.

He served as member of the Board of ASAMI-NA (LLRS) for several years, culminating as President in 2003-4, and presided over the annual meeting in Toronto.

He was awarded the “Harold A. “Pete” Mattson Award for Outstanding Leadership”, by the 2011 UTSW graduating orthopedic resident class; “Achievement Award in recognition of outstanding contributions to the profession of Orthopaedic Surgery” from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons in 2012; and “Award of Academic Excellence” by the TSRH Fellows and Staff in 2021-22. In 2021, he was inducted into the Pediatric Orthopedic Society of North America “Hall of Fame”.

He is most proud and appreciative, however, of Eleanor, his wife of 42 years; their two children (Craig, pediatric orthopedic surgeon at Boston Children’s Hospital, Boston MA; and Cailin, Global Economist for the Economist Intelligence Unit, London England); and their two (English!) grandchildren. He enjoys traveling with Eleanor, cycling, jogging, and playing old-man soccer.