

THE EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENDOCRINE SURGERY

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The evolution of endocrine surgery has been a lengthy process extending over hundreds of years. This development can be divided into 3 phases in which endocrine surgery was :-

- i) Regarded as being part of surgery in general.
- ii) Gaining credibility following the emergence of endocrinology as a science in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Surgeons began to realize that they were operating on endocrine glands often to relieve the effects of oversecretion
- iii) Performed by specialized surgeons who began to view endocrine surgery as a whole instead of concentrating on separate glands.

Increasing knowledge of endocrine physiology and an understanding of the complexities of derangement and pathophysiology facilitated the development of the specialty now based on a firm scientific foundation and precise surgical technique.

Advances in biochemistry, hormone assay, histopathology, radiological techniques, (especially cross sectional imaging), molecular biology and genetics along with minimally invasive surgical techniques dictated a close cooperation between surgeons, endocrinologists, biochemists, radiologists, pathologists, nuclear medicine specialists and basic scientists.

Extensive book and journal publications dedicated to endocrine surgery were soon accompanied by Postgraduate Courses in endocrine surgery and the formation of highly successful National and International Associations.

Against this background, examples will be drawn from surgery of the thyroid, parathyroid, adrenals, pancreas and the diffuse endocrine system of the gastrointestinal tract to illustrate how endocrine surgery has evolved into a sophisticated surgical specialty in its own right.

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