



Henri Bensahel

(Casablanca, Morocco, 1928 – Paris, France, 2009)

EPOS Founder, EPOS General Secretary (1982-87),

4th EPOS President (1989-91)

Contribution to EPOS

During a meeting organized at the end of 1980 by Dean MacEwen in Wilmington, Delaware, Henri Bensahel had the idea of creating a group of European Paediatric Orthopaedic surgeons. The first four were: Henri Bensahel (France), Jürg Baumann (Switzerland), José Mesquita Montes (Portugal), and Dietrich Tönnis (Germany). Then, Henri contacted John Sharrard (UK) to enlarge the group, and as soon as the 31st of January 1981, the five surgeons and friends met together for the first time at Hôpital Bretonneau, Paris. The decision to create a Society was taken.

Promptly, the statutes were written, and they mentioned:

- EPOS has been founded in Paris on the 31st of January 1982,
- the President, Vice-President and 4 Councilors are to be elected for 2 years,
- the General Secretary and the Treasurer are to be elected for 5 years with a possible second mandate,
- the past Presidents are automatically members of the executive board for the following 5 years,
- to become an EPOS member, 2 sponsors are necessary, a positive vote by three-quarters of the executive committee and a positive vote from two-thirds of the General Assembly,
- the official language for all activities of the Society shall be English or French.

The first official Meeting was held in Paris on 13th March 1982 at Hôpital Bretonneau. Thirteen surgeons came from 9 European countries Bensahel (host). The photo was taken by Klaus Parsch. From left to right, in the rear: Jacques Lefort (Rouen, France), Sandro Dal Monte (Bologna, Italy), José Mesquita Montes (Porto, Portugal), Gabriel Soncini (Bologna, Italy), Miguel Ferrer Torrellos (Madrid, Spain), Predrag Klisić and Damir Pajić (Belgrade, Yugoslavia), Jürgen Reimers (Copenhagen, Denmark); in the front :Joerg Baumann (Basel, Switzerland), Dietrich Tönnis (Dortmund, Germany), John Sharrard (Sheffield, UK), Henri Bensahel (Paris, France) and Klaus Parsch (Stuttgart, Germany).



Six of them (Dal Monte, Ferrer, Klisić, Lefort, Parsch, and Sharrard,) presented a paper.

At a General Assembly, all attendees accepted the bylaws of the new Society named EPOS, and they elected John Sharrard as President and Henri Bensahel as General Secretary but waited for the first official General Assembly in 1983 to elect a full board. The statutes were published in the “*Journal Officiel de la République Française*” in French, on the 30th of March 1982.

30 mars 1982. Déclaration à la préfecture de police. **European Pediatric Orthopedic Society (Société européenne d'orthopédie pédiatrique)**. Objet : promotion scientifique de l'orthopédie pédiatrique à l'échelon européen. Siège social : département d'orthopédie pédiatrique, hôpital Bretonneau, 2, rue Carpeaux, 75018 Paris.

The second EPOS Annual meeting held on the 19th of March 1983 was again in Paris, 20 surgeons from 9 countries attended. John Sharrard was elected President for 2 years. The other elected members of the executive board were Predrag Klisić (Vice-President), Henri Bensahel (General Secretary), Dietrich Tönnis (Treasurer), and 4 advisors: R. Bauer (Austria), Jürg Bauman (Switzerland), Alessandro Dal Monte (Italy), and Jorge Reimers (Denmark).

Henri Bensahel was the General Secretary from 1982 to 1987, and due to his modesty, he waited until 1989 to become the 4th President of EPOS. He organized the 1st, 2nd, and 11th annual meetings, the later in 1991 at Hôtel Lutecia, Paris. He was awarded Honorary Membership in 1994, and he received the Pro Maximis Meritis award in 2007.

Contribution to Paediatric Orthopaedics

Henri Bensahel graduated from the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Paris in 1957. He chose Paediatric Orthopaedics as a specialty, he soon became Chief Resident, then Assistant and then Head of Paediatric Orthopaedics in Bretonneau Hospital in 1972 and, later, Head of Paediatric Orthopaedics of the Robert Debre Hospital, in Paris. In 1982, he was promoted Full Professor of Paediatric Orthopaedics.

In (3)

. Curiously, at the turning-point of the current century, the *functional method* was termed the “French Method”, a name that unfortunately caught on and by which it has been called ever since by some individuals. We consider this “unfortunate” since the technique is no more French than are “fried potatoes”, another American expression. An indisputably more appropriate terminology would be the Bensahel Method (as in the Ponseti Technique) or *Bensahel’s functional method* of conservative treatment of clubfoot.

Among his tremendous scientific achievements, around 120 papers, he is famous for his contribution to the functional treatment of the clubfoot. He emphasized the importance of the midtarsal joint and the tibialis posterior tendon (1). The concept of the treatment of clubfoot was a “vigorous physical therapy”, and in case of residual deformity a surgical one-stage medioposterior release “à la carte” (2). One of his last papers was published in the first issue of the Journal of Children’s Orthopaedics and was intitled: “History of the functional method for conservative treatment of clubfoot”. He reminded that this method was not the “French method”, but the “*Bensahel’s functional method*” (figure) (3).

He led one of the first EPOS multicentric study on the congenital dislocation of the knee (CDK). Seven centers were able to study 56 cases of CDK. (4)

Early in his career, he was also interested by the bone scan in Legg Perthes Calvé disease (5), as well as other topics like traumatology in children, sport trauma, bone tumors, and patella instability. He wrote several books on pediatric traumatology and orthopaedics, and he translated into French the famous Mercer Rang’s book “Children’s Fractures” (1984).

He was extremely active in developing international collaboration in Paediatric Orthopaedics, he participated in the beginnings of international Societies where he held important positions: founder and President of IFPOS, founder of IPOTT, Chairman of the international Clubfoot Study Group.

As he wanted a specific European Journal, he created the B-version of the Journal of Pediatric Orthopaedics in 1992. Fifteen years later, in 2007, he pushed the JPO-B being the IFPOS Journal, and with Shlomo Wientroub, he contributed to the creation of the Journal of Children’s Orthopaedics, which is the current EPOS Journal.

He was involved in many other activities including a position of councilor to the French ministry of health.

In 1988, Henri Bensahel and his team moved to the Robert-Debré Hospital, Paris. After his retirement, the high standard of paediatric orthopaedics was maintained by his successors, all EPOS members: Georges F. Penneçot, Kevan Mazda (†), and today, Brice Ilharreborde.

Henri Bensahel was a great diplomat, with a vision of a great Europe. EPOS was created before the fall of the Berlin wall and Henri opened his arms widely to the surgeons of the Eastern Bloc countries. He was also a hard and courageous worker, calling everyone “day and night” to raise up any new idea and to progress as fast as possible.

Hobbies

Henri Bensahel was devoted to improving children’s health. But he was also excited to talk of politics, philosophy, arts, and of course, Paediatric Orthopaedics.

Top 5 References (English)

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2. Bensahel H, Csukonyi Z, Desgrippes Y, Chaumien JP. Surgery in residual clubfoot: one-stage medioposterior release "à la carte". J Pediatr Orthop. 1987; 7: 145-8.
3. Bensahel H, Bienayme B, Jehanno P. History of the functional method for conservative treatment of clubfoot. J Child Orthop. 2007; 1: 175-6.
4. Bensahel H, Dal Monte A, Hjelmstedt A, Bjerkreim I, Wientroub S, Matasovic T, Porat S, Bialik V. Congenital dislocation of the knee. J Pediatr Orthop. 1989; 9: 174-7.11.
5. Bensahel H, Bok B, Cavaillolles F, Csukonyi Z. Bone scintigraphy in Perthes disease. J Pediatr Orthop. 1983; 3: 302-5.



Henri Bensahel, Stuttgart, 1989
Coll. Klaus Parsch