

# Sophus von Rosen

1898–1996

In January 1996, Professor Sophus von Rosen died at the age of 97. He was Editor of *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* during 1950–1968. Sophus von Rosen, born and raised in Scania, the southern province of Sweden, received his medical degree in Lund University Medical School where he also, in the Department of Orthopedics, had his training in orthopedics. From 1933 on, he was the Head of the Department of Orthopedics in Hårnösand, at that time the only Swedish orthopedic department north of Stockholm. Here he collected the data for his thesis—“Die Infektiösen Krankheitsprozesse der Kniescheibe” (Patellar infections).

From 1940 and for 25 years, Sophus von Rosen was the chairman of the Department of Orthopedics in Malmö General Hospital where he from the very beginning made important contributions, particularly during the polio epidemics when he introduced and performed advanced reconstructive surgery and rehabilitation.

From 1948 on, Malmö Orthopedic Department became affiliated with the Lund University Medical School which had medical students and research programs.

Ortolani, an orthopedic surgeon in Pisa, Italy, pointed out that children could be born with lax hips and that this could be the cause of congenital dislocation of the hip (CDH), rather than a malformation (“acetabular dysplasia”). This laxity was easily demonstrated in the newborn but not later on. The Head of Malmö Children’s Hospital, Per Selander, and Sophus von Rosen started a campaign for early diagnosis and treatment of CDH in 1952. Selander himself examined all the newborns, also on Saturdays and Sundays, and referred those with lax, dislocated or dislocatable hips to von Rosen who designed a splint to hold the lax hips reduced until the periarticular tissues had tightened. This splint has remained unsurpassed, pos-

sibly because of the inventor’s knowledge and feeling for the problem but also, perhaps, some luck. Von Rosen never patented his splint, but it, nevertheless, came to bear his name. The name was also used for

copies that were sometimes useless, since if the children were strapped too tightly, it could cause femoral head necrosis—the von Rosen splint was an ideal compromise since it permitted motion, but kept the reduction. The method was used from 1956 on, without any change.

The radiologist, Lars Andréén, did the roentgen examinations; it was possible to verify the diagnosis, if films were taken with the hips in and out of joint and only such patients were accepted as CDH cases. Later, Nils Fredensborg demonstrated how well the screening—very few cases were missed—and the treatment—the children devel-

oped completely normal hips—actually worked in Malmö. In the 1950s and 1960s, Sophus von Rosen traveled a great deal, his method spread over the world and his results could, in most instances, be reproduced. There are, however, still areas, even in the Western World, where the technique has not been successfully introduced—even some areas in Sweden were late in adopting it.

When he retired in 1965 von Rosen resumed his traveling to Algeria. After the civil war, there were many severe leg injuries, particularly in children, caused by land-mines, and von Rosen assisted the Red Crescent with a stump revision and prosthesis-fitting program.

Sophus von Rosen maintained his contacts with orthopedics and with colleagues to a very old age. He had a full life and made contributions of lasting value to orthopedics.

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