

# International College of Surgeons



## *History*

The International College of Surgeons (ICS) was founded in 1935 by Dr. Max Thorek, a Hungarian-born surgeon who emigrated to the United States at the turn of the century. A self-made man, Thorek was 55 when he conceived the ICS after a lifetime of watching the poor struggle to afford good medical care. He also knew that the latest North American surgical techniques were often unknown elsewhere. With a passionate desire to improve conditions, Thorek traveled the world recruiting surgeons for a college that would disseminate medical knowledge among members selected for their surgical excellence, but accepted without regard to nationality, color, or creed.

In Thorek's words:

"I found myself thinking of the medieval university. I remembered how scholars traveled the length and breadth of a Europe much longer and broader than it is today to sit at the feet of learned men... I remembered that those days when learning knew no national boundaries had been days when Europe had attained a spiritual unity lost and all but forgotten since then. I hope that something of the same idea would be built in the new institution (ICS). Perhaps it could become, not only a channel through which surgical knowledge could flow quickly, easily, to all part of the world, not only a source of encouragement and inspiration for the ambitious youth of our profession, but also a force making for international understanding and good will and peace."

The first ICS members were recruited by Thorek himself. Fluent in six languages, he traveled throughout the world, converting surgeons to ICS principles. ICS filled the need for an international body of surgical specialists, and it was unique in the democracy under which it was governed. Unlike many medical societies of the time, ICS accepted all surgeons who qualified, not just a limited, exclusive number. From the beginning, leadership positions were open to all, regardless of color, creed, ethnicity, or politics. Of special interest to Thorek was the nurturing of young surgeons, who were ineligible for membership in other surgical societies. As fellows of ICS, they thrived under the influence of eminent surgeons.

National sections formed to improved conditions in their own countries, while actively supporting the international organization. In addition to sharing knowledge and encouraging young surgeons, ICS members banded together to assist in crisis situations such as: floods in the Netherlands and Italy, epidemics in Ethiopia and Ecuador, World War II relief in Hungary and England, and aid to Cuban doctors displaced during the Communist revolution.

Before Thorek's death in 1960, he was able to see his dreams realized. And the work he began in 1935 continues today, but with an even broader focus. In the 1990s, ICS acts with a global focus and influence true to the vision that Thorek and his colleagues had imagined 60 years ago.

A WORLD FEDERATION OF GENERAL SURGEONS AND SURGICAL SPECIALISTS, INC.

INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS, 1516 N. LAKE SHORE DRIVE, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60610-1694, U.S.A.  
TELEPHONE: (312) 642-3555 FAX: (312) 787-1624

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## Overview

### ***Mission***

Founded in 1935 in Geneva, Switzerland, by Max Thorex, a Hungarian-born surgeon who practiced in Chicago, the International College of Surgeons (ICS) is a not-for-profit organization. Our missions are: Teach, Research, Communication and Leadership.

### ***Vision***

To improve the lives of our patients through the development and education of our members and the advancement of our field

### ***Organization***

ICS is composed of approximately 8,000 general surgeons and surgical specialists from over 100 countries. Members are organized into 60 National Sections, each directed by its own national officers. Members who reside in countries in which a national section does not exist are designated as Members at Large. All Fellows in good standing are eligible for leadership positions, and geographic representation is customary

### ***Congresses and Meetings***

National and International ICS scientific meetings provide an opportunity for members to exchange professional knowledge, establish friendships, and create mutual respect and understanding in an International setting.

### ***Publication***

The official Journal of the International College of Surgeons, *International Surgery* contains articles by outstanding surgeons from around the world. An Internationally respected Editorial Board comprised of surgeons from numerous countries.

### ***Clinical Surgical/Teaching Teams Project***

ICS established the Surgical Team program in 1974 to send groups of qualified teaching surgeons to developing countries to share up-to-date surgical advancements and techniques with local surgeons, offer the best surgical advice on treatment and prevention, and provide first class surgery to less fortunate people.

### ***Scholarships***

ICS makes grants available to applicants who wish to enhance their surgical skills through post graduate training.

### ***International Museum of Surgical Science***

Housed in a 4-story, historic landmarked structure, the museum's collection portrays the mysteries, breakthroughs, failures and milestones that have shaped modern surgical science. Since 1954, the Museum has provided education on the history and progress of surgery and related medical sciences to hundreds of thousands of students and visitors from around the world.

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