

History of Cardiology

Postal Stamps & Cardiac Surgery

N Hosain

Department of Cardiovascular Surgery, Chittagong

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Postal stamps are small pieces of paper, which are pasted as the evidence of payment of postage on the items of moving mail. The stamps are usually made from some kind of special paper, with a national designation and denomination on the face, and a gum adhesive on the reverse side. Postage stamps are used to pay for the costs involved in moving mail as well as other business necessities such as insurance and registration.

The stamps, which are generally made in the shape of a small rectangle with perforated edges, although triangles or other shapes are also occasionally used, are affixed to an envelope or other postal cover that the customer wishes to dispatch. The item is then processed by the postal department, where a postmark, usually known as a cancellation mark, is applied over the stamp, marking the stamp as 'used' to prevent its reuse.

Postage stamps have facilitated the delivery of mail since the mid Nineteenth Century. Earlier ink and hand-stamps (hence the word 'stamp'), usually made from wood or cork, were often used to frank the mail and confirm the payment of postage. A modified mechanized version of this ancient franking system is available in the post offices of many countries till date despite the immense popularity of postal stamps. The first adhesive postage stamp, commonly referred to as the 'Penny Black', was issued in the United Kingdom in 1840. The first officially perforated¹ stamps were issued in February 1854.

As postage stamps with their engraved imagery began to appear on a widespread basis, historians and collectors began to take notice. The study of postage stamps and their use is referred to as 'philately'. Stamp collecting can both be a hobby and a form of historical study and reference, as government-issued postage stamps and their mailing systems have always been involved with the history of nations.

Commemorative stamp is a postage stamp, often issued on a significant date such as an anniversary or centenary, to honor or commemorate a place, event, person, or object. The subject of the

commemorative stamp is usually spelled out in print, unlike definitive stamps which normally depict the subject along with the denomination and country name only. Many postal services issue several commemorative stamps each year, sometimes holding first day of issue ceremonies at locations connected with the subjects. Commemorative stamps can be used alongside ordinary stamps. Unlike definitive stamps that are often reprinted and sold over a prolonged period of time for general usage, commemorative stamps are usually printed in limited quantities and sold for a much shorter period of time.

Recently a postage stamp has been issued in Bangladesh celebrating the 30 years of cardiac surgery here (Fig 1). The nicely designed commemorative stamp has 10 Taka face value and presents a photograph of the new building of the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) building along with the sketches of a heart & a heart lung machine². However the first open heart surgery of Bangladesh actually took place on 18th September 1981 a few hundred meters away at the then premises of NICVD. This actual site of OT 1 of old NICVD premises was converted to the Principal's office of Begum Khaleda Zia Medical College later renamed as Shahid Suhrawardi Medical College.



Fig.-1: Bangladeshi stamp celebrating 30 years of cardiac surgery.

India had published a commemorative stamp (Fig 2) in 1996 marking the 100 years of Cardiac Surgery. The Rs 5 value stamp was issued on 25th February 1996. The first ever heart surgery was performed by a German surgeon Ludwig Rehn³ on 7th September 1896. He repaired the stab injury on the Right ventricle of patient. India's not that friendly neighbor China published a stamp on cardiac surgery depicting a surgical team with the patient all portrayed in a landscape fashion (Fig 3). Released in 1975, this Chinese postage stamp portrays open heart surgery with the use of acupuncture for anesthesia.



Fig.-2: Indian stamp on 100 years of cardiac surgery.



Fig.-3: Chinese stamp on cardiac surgery.

As a highly dedicated member of the British Commonwealth, New Zealand was very much used to printing the busts of its monarchs. But in 1995 coming out of the tradition, they published a series of postal stamps named

'Famous New Zealanders' (Fig 4 & 5)) in the field of science, medicine & education. Obviously the all time most famous New Zealander cardiac surgeon Sir Brian Barratt-Boyes was in one of those. Sir Brian Barratt-Boyes, internationally renowned heart surgeon, pioneered new surgical techniques which have earned him the highest respect from peers and patients alike. He is also the co-author of one of the most read textbooks in cardiac surgery. He was knighted at the age of 47 for his contribution to heart surgery. Sir Brian Barratt-Boyes was one of a few New Zealanders honored by being featured on a postage stamp during his lifetime.



Fig.-4: Stamp set on famous New Zealanders

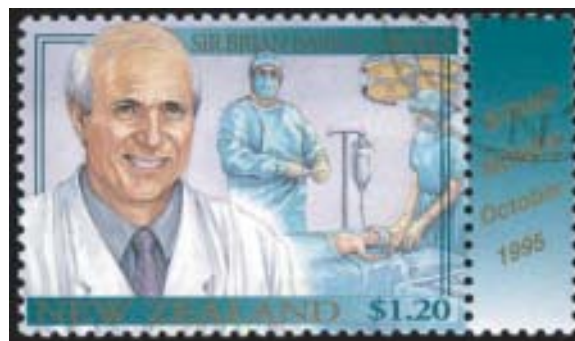


Fig.-5: Sir Brian Barratt-Boyes



Fig.-6: A postage stamp commemorating the act of Christian Barnard with postmark from his Groote Schuur Hospital, South Africa in 1967.



Fig.-7A & B: Christian Barnard, seen on two stamps from Dominica printed on 1997 & 2000.



Fig.-8: Bernard on a stamp of Bhutan



Fig.-9: Bernard on a stamp of St Helena



Fig.-10: Bernard on a stamp of Yemen.

Not many cardiac surgeons are so lucky to decorate a postage stamp. One notable exception is Christian Barnard. This renowned South African cardiac surgeon is known all over the world for his legendary first heart transplantation at Groote Schuur hospital, Cape Town. On December 3, 1967, Chris Barnard led the surgical team that performed the first human-to-human heart transplant. The operation captured the public’s imagination as no surgical procedure had before or since, and Barnard soon became an international celebrity⁴. His fame & celebrity status made his face of an immense philatelic value to be portrayed on the stamps of countries beyond the borders of his own. The pioneering act of heart transplantation can now be found on the stamps of countries like, Bhutan, Granada, Dominican Republic, St Helena, Yemen, Spain and Greece besides his own, the Republic of South Africa. Barnard’s rival American surgeon Norman Shumway performed the first successful heart transplantation in the United States⁵. Despite having done all the background research work, he was unfortunate to be second to Barnard, who took away all the name & fame. He is not even displayed in the stamps of his own country.

The French counterpart of Christian Barnard was his namesake, Christian Cabrol, who is credited with the glory of performing first heart & first heart-lung transplantation of Europe. In 2008 France published a beautiful stamp commemorating the 40th anniversary of that



Fig.-11: Two stylish French stamps celebrating 40 years of heart transplantation & 30 years of heart-lung transplantation published in 2008 & 2012 respectively.

event (Fig. 11). The French Post released on 18 June 2012, another stamp (Fig 11) to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the first European heart-lung transplant. The transplant was conducted by Professors Christian Cabrol and Iradj Gandjbakhch at the Hopital La Pitie Salpetriere. Interestingly despite the towering respect for Cabrol in France, the stamps didn't display his image like his South African nemesis.

Several other countries including Russia, Brazil and South African neighbor Zambia also printed commemorative stamps on cardiac surgery (Fig 12 A, B & C). Fiji published a beautiful set of postage stamps commemorating the visit of a team of foreign doctor & nurse volunteers to perform cardiac surgery there (Fig 13).



Fig.-12 A: Commemorative stamps regarding cardiac surgery published by Russia.



Fig.-12 B: Commemorative stamps regarding cardiac surgery published by Brazil.



Fig.-12 C: Commemorative stamps regarding cardiac surgery published by Zambia.



Fig.-13 A: Great Set of 4 MINT Medical Postage Stamps commemorating the visit of a group of doctor and Nurses volunteers visiting Fiji to perform Open Heart Surgery.

To end the article, let's see a very interesting stamp (Fig 14) from USA. Cardiac surgery is considered as one of the most sophisticated branch of medical science. Similarly cardiac surgeons are often blessed with a very charismatic status in the society. This American stamp just denotes a witty dual message. 'My

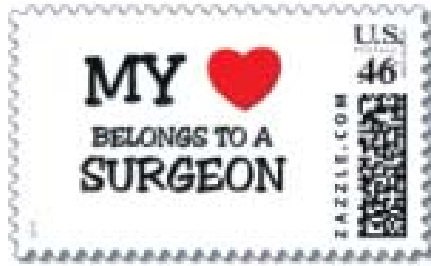


Fig-14: US stamp on a cardiac surgeon.

heart belongs to a surgeon', which could either be the sweet words of a grateful patient or that of a frantic admirer!

References:

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