



Our History

ORATM
ORTHOPEDICS
Focused on You

the vision

It started with a vision to provide the best possible orthopedic care to people in the Quad City community. A place where a few eager, young surgeons could provide high quality, sophisticated orthopedic care that wasn't readily available on either side of the river.

the early years

In the early 1960s (1963 to be exact) Orthopaedic Surgery Associates (OSA) was formed. OSA was founded by Dr. William Whitmore, a young surgeon just finishing residency at the University of Iowa. He had big ambitions of going to Denver or Montana, but a friend of his recommended he visit Davenport. After visiting Davenport, he decided to call it home and he quickly settled into a 540-square foot clinic space with little more than a waiting room, an office, and one exam room. The first month he started taking care of patients, he collected just \$180.00. Dr. Whitmore would occasionally go home at night and say to his wife, the waiting room was full today - the patient came in with their family.

Within two years, the other orthopedic surgeons in the Davenport area had either moved away or retired and Dr. Whitmore decided it was time to recruit his first partner. He went to medical school with Dr. John Sinning and in July 1965, Dr. Sinning moved from Minnesota where he was practicing at the time and joined OSA. The first thing Dr. Whitmore did was take a vacation!

Not knowing that their paths would continually cross and one day meet, on the other side of the mighty river, around that same time, Drs. Harold Jersild and Jerald Laros founded Moline Orthopaedic Associates (MOA). Drs. Jersild and Laros too found themselves in tight quarters in a small, windowless office off 7th Street in Moline - an office where one didn't know what the weather was like until you left work at the end of the day. This, coupled with the fact that they didn't have a waiting room - patients would have to wait in their cars and clinic staff would go out to the parking lot and yell their name!

When these young surgeons began private practice in the Quad Cities in the early 1960s, the landscape of the Quad Cities and healthcare was dramatically different than it is today. With few four-lane roads, fewer stop lights, and no shopping malls, the Quad Cities was much quieter than they are today.

Medicine was still the domain of the general practitioner and before these surgeons began practice, GPs were still performing orthopedic surgery. Several hospitals served the area, including Mercy (East and West) in Davenport and Moline Public. Urgent care hadn't been invented and ER trauma specialists would not appear for many years.



Drs. Whitmore, Jersild, and Laros realized that the Quad Cities' growing patient base would benefit from having access to orthopedic surgeons. Separate but simultaneously, they embarked on what is now a long tradition of providing personalized orthopedic care that continues to this day for patients throughout the Quad Cities.

the formative years

In the summer of 1965, Dr. Whitmore, Dr. Sinning, and their one and only staff member moved to the Medical Arts Building (across from Mercy West on Lombard Street). They had what they described as "a little more room and access to an x-ray facility." Their practice was growing and they were getting busier with physician referrals. Both Drs. Whitmore and Sinning were each seeing 15-20 patients or more in an afternoon clinic.

They performed surgery only in the morning at either Mercy East or West, as there was no air conditioning in the operating rooms, and if they opened the windows, the flies would come in! They owned their own surgical equipment, as well as the surgical implant plates and prostheses used in surgery. Most surgical cases required a lengthy inpatient hospitalization.

In 1967, they decided they needed to hire a third partner and Dr. Dennis Miller joined OSA, at which time not only did Dr. Whitmore go on vacation but so did Dr. Sinning. An every-other-night call schedule moving to an every third night was a welcome relief to the young physicians and their families.

Just a year later in 1968, after months of planning, they built a new 7,500-square foot building that included eight exam rooms, a nursing station, x-ray, and a cast room. The new location was located off of Lombard and Marquette (now St. Ambrose University's nursery school). The feature of the building most remembered was their physician office. It was a large room with a bench across the side and drawers; each physician had just two drawers. The room was a true testament to their collegial atmosphere and collaborative working style.

Meanwhile in Moline, Dr. Jerald Laros had decided to leave the practice to pursue a career in academia. Dr. Harold Jersild began his search for a second partner to keep up with the increasing volume of patients. Dr. William Dougherty, originally from Cedar Rapids, was in town visiting his wife's family and he met with Dr. Jersild to discuss joining the practice. Despite offers from the Cleveland Clinic and a prestigious private practice in Austin, Texas, Dr. Dougherty, with some urging from his wife, decided to call the Quad Cities home.

Drs. Jersild and Dougherty continued to operate clinic out of the small, windowless office off 7th Street. Due to the heavy agricultural industry in the area, including CASE, International Harvester, and John Deere, they had a very busy practice, seeing on average of 30 patients in clinic each afternoon.

They performed surgical cases at both Moline Public and Lutheran hospitals and occasionally at St. Anthonys in Rock Island. Common surgical procedures included trauma surgery with the use of internal fixation (screws, plates, and rods) to guide the repair of broken bones and laminectomies (spine). A laminectomy procedure would average a 10-day hospital stay.



the formative years (continued)

Eminently compatible, the small group of physicians grew to know each other very well through long hours of working side-by-side. The meshing of personality and work style laid the foundation for the collegial atmosphere the organization would develop in years to come.

the growth years

By the early 1970s, OSA was now a thriving practice, serving patients throughout the Iowa-Quad Cities area. To meet the needs of a growing patient population, Dr. Ralph Congdon joined OSA in 1972. Early on, he commuted from Iowa City, staying at the homes of his partners the nights he was on call.

MOA was also experiencing an expanding patient population and growing reputation which attracted two new physicians, Drs. Marvin Skoglund and Kenneth Blecker. In need of additional clinic space to accommodate the growth, a new 6,000 square-foot clinic was built (now the Medical Arts Building) which included eight exam rooms, front office, business office, and what could only be described as a massive waiting room, x-ray room, cast room, and two medical offices which all four physicians shared.

Drs. Dougherty and Whitmore performed their first total hip replacements in early 1972. The first total hip replacements would require six hours of surgery and a lengthy hospital stay. Total joint replacement would revolutionize the treatment of arthritic joints. With the continual enhancement of the prosthetic materials and surgical techniques, it is considered to be one of the most successful orthopedic interventions of its generation.

Additionally, the introduction of fiberoptics and miniature television cameras in 1972 was a major technological development that would lead to the widespread use of arthroscopic surgery. The development of specialized instrumentation and techniques over the next decade would have a profound impact on the evolution of orthopedic surgery by way of smaller incisions and shorter periods of recovery.

It was around this same time that the hospital rules changed. Two surgeons were no longer required in the OR. A surgeon and an assistant could now perform surgical cases. With this change, the practice hired their first Orthopedic Physician Assistant to assist with surgical cases, a move that was very innovative in the medical community at the time.

During the 1980s, both clinics continued to draw new patients and expand. The founders recognized that physicians and employees needed to work in an atmosphere of collegiality and mutual respect to deliver the highest quality care to their patients. They endeavored to recruit and retain physicians and employees who shared this perspective and who placed patient care first.



the growth years (continued)

Drs. Ripperger, Irely, and Cassel joined OSA in the 1980s and together they nurtured a high-caliber staff of physician assistants, nurses, and business office staff who ensured smooth, effective operations.

It was also during this decade that OSA decided to add rheumatology to their continuum of care with the addition of several rheumatologists to the practice. With the addition of this new specialty, the practice changed its name from OSA to ORA Orthopaedic and Rheumatology Associates.



Drs. Schnell, Ripperger, Miller, Irely, and Whitmore

ORA had grown to be one of the largest orthopedic practices in the area. It continued to draw new patients and expand, doubling in size to eight orthopedic surgeons and moving to a 22,000 square-foot building further down on Lombard Street. ORA occupied the first floor and a physical therapy clinic and an orthotics and prosthetics practice were available on the lower level.

Meanwhile, Dr. Blecker moved out of state and two new physicians joined MOA. Drs. Thomas VonGillern and Michael Gerdes began practice the summer of 1981. That same year, Dr. VonGillern performed the first outpatient carpal tunnel surgery. A few short years later in 1984, Dr. John Baker moved to the Quad Cities to join the practice, after having spent nearly seven years at a multi-specialty practice in Sterling, Illinois.

Throughout this decade, still separate but simultaneously, ORA and MOA continued their mission to make orthopedic healthcare more accessible to the community. The clinics stayed abreast of medical technology, incorporating a computer for billing and scheduling. This, combined with the state-of-the-art medical equipment and a highly trained and dedicated medical staff, solidified their reputation for excellence in the community.



the years of transition and change

As ORA and MOA entered the 1990s, growth continued to occur on both sides of the river, and a dramatic time of change lay ahead.

Patient demand continued with the practice establishing satellite clinics in Muscatine, Clinton, and Silvis. Dr. Alward had since joined MOA and shortly thereafter, they outgrew their space and opened a 20,000 square-foot clinic at 520 Valley View Drive (current location) in 1991. To meet the growing trend of more surgeries being performed on an outpatient basis and to provide patients a very efficient and patient-centric experience, MOA opened Quad City Ambulatory Surgery Center in 1992. The surgery center included two surgery suites and post-operative and recovery areas.

Additional physicians were recruited to both MOA and ORA. Dr. Turner joined MOA in 1991 and Drs. Millea, Martin, and Rink joined ORA during the early to mid 90s.

Despite the success of both practices, they faced challenges. Chief among them was the changing landscape of healthcare reimbursement as insurance companies moved toward managed care as a way to curtail spiraling healthcare costs. Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) were fast becoming the primary reimbursement method. This change propelled the practices to seek outside partners and after forging their own ways, ORA and MOA arrived at the same destination. By remaining together, the physicians believed they could more effectively provide quality, leading-edge orthopedic care for the community and provide a more attractive organization for recruiting and retaining employees. In 1997, MOA and ORA joined forces.

By the late 90s and early 2000s, the clinics' original founders had either retired or were reaching retirement age. New physicians had joined on both sides of the river and the accelerating technological advances in medicine and information technology became the dominant challenges of the decade.

With the increased use of MRI imaging in orthopedics, the practice purchased a MRI scanner and with that opened Premier MRI in Iowa in 2000. Around that same timeframe, the practice implemented its first electronic medical record (EMR) system with the implementation of Allscripts. In the mid-2000s, the practice would replace Allscripts with the Stryker (now Merge) EMR system. Shortly thereafter, the Stryker PACs system would be implemented, allowing the electronic storage of its x-ray images.

In need of additional clinic space to accommodate growth, a 76,000 square-foot building was built in 2007 off 53rd Avenue in Bettendorf. In addition to the clinical space, the new facility included an on-site MRI scanner, physical therapy clinic, prosthetics practice, and outpatient surgery center. Crow Valley Orthopedic Surgery Center, a joint venture with ORA and Genesis Health System, opened in April 2007.

Despite rheumatology and orthopedics interrelating, the two business models were somewhat different, prompting the final rheumatologist to leave the practice in 2007. Despite no longer employing rheumatologists, the practice kept the Orthopedic & Rheumatology Associates (ORA) name, as the community had definitely come to know and love them through this name. And in 2009, Orthopedic & Rheumatology Associates' name was modified slightly to ORA Orthopedics, a tribute to the past, present, and future.



where we are today

ORA has built a continuum of orthopedic care for its patients by adding services that enhance the quality and accessibility of care. In 2010, durable medical equipment (DME) services were brought in-house, adding the availability of CPM and cold therapy. In 2011, in partnership with Rock Valley Physical Therapy, the practice opened ORA Physical Therapy in Moline. A second physical therapy site was added in February 2013 at the Bettendorf clinic. As a service to our patients, a walk-in urgent care clinic (Urgent OrthoCARE) opened in September 2013, providing after-hours orthopedic care for acute orthopedic injuries.

Over the past 50 years, ORA has continually strived to make a difference in the lives of their patients by providing quality, compassionate, and accessible care. From our humble beginnings in two small clinics in Davenport and Moline, we have grown to 27 physicians, 12 physician assistants, and over 250 employees working in seven clinic locations. As the areas largest and most comprehensive orthopedic provider, we have built an integrated continuum of orthopedic care that includes ambulatory services, outpatient surgery, diagnostic imaging, DME, pharmacy, and physical therapy. Our physicians are sub-specialty trained in sports medicine, adult reconstruction, hand and upper extremity, trauma, spine, and pediatrics.

The founding fathers' impact on orthopedic care in the Quad Cities has been immeasurable. Without their unflagging energy, enthusiasm, and engaging personalities, ORA Orthopedics would not be the astonishing successful organization it has become.

Today, ORA Orthopedics remains an organization comprised of physicians and medical and administrative staff working together in a collaborative environment to provide patients with excellent care. Though much has changed since we first opened our doors, our commitment to our patients is as strong as ever. Just as in our early days, our physicians and staff stay focused on total patient care, working as an effective team. As we grow, we continually strive for ever-higher quality of care.

Our reputation continues to attract the finest physicians and medical and administrative staff. While that gives us a unique advantage working with insurers and hospitals today and in the future, we will retain the warm, small town, community feeling our founders had. Guided by our values, we will continue to offer the Quad Cities access to the finest physicians and healthcare facilities. Every day we are dedicated to realizing the ideals and values of our founding fathers to provide the highest quality of care by making our patients the focus of what we do.



Celebrating 50 Years of Orthopedic Excellence
Orthopedic Surgical Instruments and Implants through the Decades
donated by Dr. Willia Whitmore, Founding Father