

# Ambulatory Surgery in Private Sector-Multidisciplinary Free-standing Hospital

## Cirurgia de Ambulatório no Setor Privado – Hospital Multidisciplinar Autônomo

Sónia Vilaça<sup>1\*</sup>

### \*Corresponding Author/Autor Correspondente

Sónia Vilaça [sonia.pinto.vilaca@lusiadas.pt]

Hospital Lusiadas Braga, Rua da escola de enfermagem 4700-000 Braga

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0368-2946>

<https://doi.org/10.48687/lj.202>

The foundations of modern-day surgery were laid by James Nicoll at the turn of the 20th century, with his work at Sick Children's Hospital and Dispensary in Glasgow, Scotland (1909).<sup>1</sup>

An impressive growth in day surgery has been documented during the last two decades, following the development of short-acting anesthetics and new minimally invasive surgical techniques. These minimally invasive approaches have expanded the scope of ambulatory surgery, allowing for the treatment of conditions that were previously considered too complex for outpatient settings. Procedures such as laparoscopy and arthroscopy have enabled surgeons to perform complex surgeries, leading to faster recovery times and reduced postoperative pain.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, advancements in anesthesia have played a central role in the evolution of ambulatory surgery. The widespread adoption of regional anesthetic techniques, such as nerve blocks and spinal anesthesia, has allowed for effective pain management with fewer systemic side effects, facilitating early discharge and rapid recovery. Additionally, the use of enhanced recovery protocols has optimized perioperative care, further minimizing the length of hospital stays and increasing patient satisfaction.<sup>2-4</sup>

The integration of technology into ambulatory surgical practice has also been instrumental in improving patient outcomes.

From advanced imaging modalities for preoperative planning to robotic-assisted surgical systems for precision and accuracy during procedures, technology continues to push the boundaries of what is achievable in ambulatory surgery. Moreover, the adoption of telemedicine platforms has facilitated remote pre-operative assessments and postoperative follow-ups, enhancing convenience for both patients and healthcare providers.<sup>5</sup>

The evolution and continuous growth of ambulatory surgery is one of the greatest successes of the organizational evolution and clinical practices registered in the Portuguese National Health Service (NHS) in the last two decades. It has greatly contributed to increasing the response to the citizens' health needs improving access, quality, and efficiency of the surgical care provided in Portugal. This area is expected to continue to be one of the priorities on the agenda of our country's health policies since it plays a very important role in the economic sustainability of all Health Systems.<sup>6</sup>

In Portugal, outpatient surgery accounts for about 70% of all surgeries performed in the public sector. In recent years, not only has the number of surgeries increased, but so has the complexity of the surgeries and patients with increasingly more comorbidities.<sup>7</sup> The success of ambulatory surgery in Portugal has opened the door to the interest of private health groups to invest in this field for the expansion of business opportunities.

1. Coordenadora de cirurgia geral, Hospital Lusiadas Braga, Portugal. Diretora Clínica, Hospital Lusiadas Braga, Portugal

**Recebido/Received:** 13/03/2024 – **Aceite/Accepted:** 15/03/2024 – **Publicado online/Published online:** 18/03/2024 – **Publicado / Published:** –

© Author(s) (or their employer(s)) and Lusiadas Scientific Journal 2024. Re-use permitted under CC BY-NC 4.0. No commercial re-use.

© Autor (es) (ou seu (s) empregador (es)) e Lusiadas Scientific Journal 2024. Reutilização permitida de acordo com CC BY-NC 4.0. Nenhuma reutilização comercial.

A multidisciplinary free-standing ambulatory center provides highly specialized care and expertise across various surgical specialties, making it an attractive option for patients seeking efficient and effective outpatient services. This type of hospital is dedicated only to perform same-day surgical procedures. These centers are equipped with advanced medical technology and staffed with highly trained and experienced healthcare professionals, including surgeons, anesthesiologists, nurses, and support staff.<sup>8</sup>

They offer multiple benefits to patients, including the global reduction of complications especially healthcare-associated infections, improved outcomes, reduced waiting lists, faster recovery times, and global lower healthcare costs when compared to traditional hospital settings. Ambulatory Surgery Centers have demonstrated, additionally, personalized care provided by a more humanized staff leading to higher levels of patient and professional satisfaction.<sup>7</sup>

Within the private sector, outpatient surgery is residual and few units offer it to their patients as a first option, regardless of the complexity of the intervention. In this sector, there are only a few units, with this multidisciplinary and patient-centered organizational model, with well-defined clinical protocols and pathways, with dedicated human resources and training in this area, to comply with the recommended quality and safety standards. There is still a long way to go in terms of demystifying outpatient surgery in the private sector and giving it the importance and prominence, it deserves.

The Lusíadas Saúde Group has made a big investment in Ambulatory surgery in the private sector. At the end of 2020, during the pandemic, the first multidisciplinary hospital dedicated to ambulatory surgery was opened, the Hospital Lusíadas Braga. This hospital has been following its path in a pioneering and innovative way, to provide this kind of medical care.

Hospital Lusíadas Braga is a center dedicated exclusively to ambulatory surgery with a freestanding unit, the first of its kind in the private sector and similar to very few in the public sector. We have benefited from our experience and success in the public sector, which made it possible for us to invest in a project of this scale and with this innovative focus, on the private sector. Our biggest challenge is to demonstrate that it is possible to implement this clinical project in the private sector with the safety and quality required for this type of surgery and with the increase of the complexity of the procedures and patients: through the technical differentiation of teams; availability of clinical teams for home care and the implementation of monitoring solutions; and measuring results through clinical and operational metrics, to continuously adapt protocols.

The fundamental cornerstone of this project is to combine innovation, technology, and differentiation with an experienced and highly differentiated team of professionals, to provide excellence in health care, never neglecting humanization and providing the best possible care and experience. We have an integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative clinical project, that puts the patient always first.<sup>8</sup>

Effective leadership is crucial for the success of ambulatory surgery. It provides strategic direction, optimizes the management of resources, motivates the team, drives quality improvement, and engages stakeholders. Communication between management and staff is essential for efficiency and effectiveness. Careful patient selection, standardized protocols, experienced surgeons, motivated patients with a positive attitude, and well-trained and motivated teams are also key success factors.<sup>8,9</sup>

Today we are an outpatient surgery center of excellence and innovation in our country, experiencing an increase in the complexity of the surgeries performed as well as the number of comorbidities of the intervened patients. We currently perform multiple major and highly complex surgeries on an outpatient basis, which would have been unthinkable a few years ago, namely bariatric surgery, complex abdominal wall surgery, biliary surgery, breast and urological oncological surgery, endoscopic and mini-invasive spinal surgery and major orthopedic surgery in various anatomical areas, among others.

It is my conviction that the way to move forward for healthcare is through outpatient medical care, which will lead to health gains and add value to the healthcare systems. We need to invest in the population's health literacy and change their mindset, as well as in the training of health professionals to make them aware of the advantages of this type of model, to contribute to its growth in the private sector.

Financing models for outpatient surgery also have to keep pace with current and future trends in outpatient healthcare. This model should be valued according to what it adds to health gains for patients and the health system. Insurer funding is based on Value Based Health Care models rather than on a "fee for service".<sup>7,10</sup>

The challenges are great, but we must turn them into opportunities, and ambulatory surgery is the answer to several current and future health challenges in Portugal.

In conclusion, ambulatory surgery has emerged as a milestone of modern surgical practice, offering patients safe, efficient, and cost-effective alternatives to traditional inpatient procedures. With ongoing advancements in technology, anesthesia,

and perioperative care, the future of ambulatory surgery holds great promise for further improving patient outcomes and expanding the scope of procedures that can be safely performed in outpatient settings.

## Responsabilidades Éticas

**Conflitos de Interesse:** Os autores declaram não possuir conflitos de interesse.

**Suporte Financeiro:** O presente trabalho não foi suportado por nenhum subsídio ou bolsa ou bolsa.

**Proveniência e Revisão por Pares:** Comissionado; revisão externa por pares.

## Ethical Disclosures

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

**Financial Support:** This work has not received any contribution grant or scholarship.

**Provenance and Peer Review:** Commissioned; externally peer reviewed.

## References

1. Nicoll JM. The surgery of infancy. *BMJ*. 1909;753-756
2. Coppens M, Steenhout A, De Baerdemaeker L; Adjuvants for balanced anesthesia in ambulatory surgery. *Best Pract Res Clin Anaesthesiol*. 2023;37:409-20. doi: 10.1016/j.bpa.2022.12.003.
3. Rajan N, Rosero EB, Joshi GP. Patient Selection for Adult Ambulatory Surgery: A Narrative Review. *Anesth Analg*. 2021;133:1415-30. doi: 10.1213/ANE.0000000000005605.
4. Joshi GP. Enhanced recovery pathways for ambulatory surgery. *Curr Opin Anaesthesiol*. 2020;33:711-7. doi: 10.1097/ACO.0000000000000923.
5. Singh M, Li YW. Digital technology in Perioperative Care. *Ambul Surg*. 2022;28:4-7.
6. Nunes J, Gomes R, Povo A, Alves E; Quality Indicators in Ambulatory Surgery: A Literature Review Comparing Portuguese and International Systems. *Acta Med Port*. 2018; 31; 425-30.
7. Silva M, Silva J, Novo J, Oliveira F, Carneiro E, Mourão J. The Patient Perspective Regarding Ambulatory Surgery: An Observational Study. *Acta Med Port* 2022;35:743-8.
8. Cruz J, Torres R; Skills in Ambulatory Surgery: Do We All Have Them? *Lusíadas Sci J*. January 2024
9. Guertin M, Heard J, Del Rosario T. Ambulatory Surgery Center Medical Director: Visionary Leader. *Anesthesiol Clin*. 2019;37:389-400. doi: 10.1016/j.anclin.2019.01.009.
10. Warnakulasuriya SR, Patel RC, Singleton GF, Moonesinghe SR. Patient-reported outcomes for ambulatory surgery. *Curr Opin Anaesthesiol*. 2020;33:768-73.