The first neurosurgical procedures in Sweden were carried out in the late 18th century by general surgeons. Dr. Herbert Olivecrona (1891-1980) was a self-educated neurosurgeon and he is undoubtedly the founder and father of Swedish neurosurgery. He started the first Swedish neurosurgical department, in the Serafimer hospital in Stockholm in 1935, and he attracted many pupils, from both inside and outside the country, many of whom later started new neurosurgical clinics in Sweden or abroad.

The neurosurgical clinic in Lund was started by Prof. Lars Leksell and Dr. Nils Lundberg in 1946. Prof. Leksell later became chief in Stockholm, when the neurosurgical department was moved from the Serafimer hospital to the Karolinska hospital in 1964. In 1947 the neurosurgical department in the Söder hospital in Stockholm was founded by Dr. Olof Sjökvist. That department later merged with the department in the Karolinska hospital. In Gothenburg a neurosurgical department was started by Dr. Gösta Norlén in 1953. In 1963 the neurosurgical department in Uppsala was started by Dr. Einar Bohm, and in Linköping a neurosurgical department was started a year later, in 1964, by Dr. Stig Jeppson. Lastly, the neurosurgical department in Umeå was started in 1969, by Dr. Carl-Axel Thulin. Hence, today there are six neurosurgical departments in Sweden, one in each of the country’s six university hospitals.

Swedish neurosurgery has influenced the development of neurosurgery in an international perspective. Prof. Leksell developed the stereotactical technique, with the aim to be able to make deep brain lesions with anatomical precision, to treat pain and movement disorders. Together with the physicist Börje Larsson in Uppsala he developed the first gamma-knife. Dr. Nils Lundberg established the method of measuring intracranial pressure with a catheter placed in the ventricular system. Many more examples could be mentioned here. In a later article I will give an overview of the current status of neurosurgery in Sweden.

(From: Lars Wallstedt och Bengt Linderoth: Swedish neurosurgery– a historical review. Swedish surgical board, 100 years 1905-2005, Göran Eklund, Boel Engarås, Ulf Gunnarsson, Rune)
As I welcome comments to this article, I would be happy to see other members give a similar resumé of how neurosurgery started in their countries, and how the situation is today.

Untill next time -