Huddled heads steeped in concentration with skilled hands performing life-saving procedures—this historic photograph of Dr. Ida Scudder and team at the operating table has captured a typical working day. In 1902, when Dr. Ida began surgeries at the Mary Taber Schell Hospital, the first seeds for surgeries in CMC were sown.

Shown below are the list of surgeries performed by Dr. Ida in 1902.

The expansion and growth ever since has been colossal which culminated in the evolution of surgical services. Thus a historic milestone came forth with Dr. Ida as the head and the first lecturer. She was assisted by Dr. Jessie Findlay, assistant professor in surgery. As the medical college began expanding, more facilities were required and male staff had to be appointed to cater to the needs of the male patients. The doors were then opened to Dr. Norman S. Macpherson (1944), Dr. John S. Carman (1945), Dr. Paul W. Brand (1946) and Dr. T. Howard Somervell (1948).

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P.T.O
The timeline given below is a brief glimpse of the major spurts of development in this area:

1924: Department of General Surgery moved to the newly built hospital (Cole Dispensary) at Thottapalayam, Vellore.
1928: Weyerhaeuser Surgical block (with operation theatre complex and in-patient wards)
1944: Surgical outpatient and inpatient facilities for men
1947: Surgical Wards A, B & H established
1948: Department of General Surgery divided into three units, each with a specialty (Urology / Orthopedics / Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery)
1948: Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery under the umbrella of Department of Surgery
1949: Department of Neurosurgery and Neurology
1950: Independent Departments of Cardiothoracic surgery and Neurosurgery
1950: Postgraduate training in General Surgery
1957: Department of Orthopedics and Hand and Leprosy Reconstructive Surgery.
1960: The specialty of Paediatric Surgery identified within the Department of General Surgery
1963: Department of Urology.
1967: Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.
1970: The specialty of Peripheral Vascular Surgery identified within the Department of General Surgery.
1971: First Renal Transplant
1977: Department of Paediatric Surgery.
1988: Peripheral Vascular Laboratory
1989: Surgical Intensive Care Unit. (SICU)
1999: Esophageal motility laboratory
1999: Liver transplantation. (Cadaver donor)
2005: Live donor liver transplant.

Many more complications have been resolved and lives changed owing to advancements in technology. With renewed and upgraded skills, the scalpels continue to be wielded with the same fervour and commitment which began with Dr. Ida.

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