The 4th Scottish AO Principles of Operative Fracture Management Course for Surgeons was held in March 2007 in Edinburgh. The four day course was held at the new surgical skills centre, Quincentenary Hall (www.surgeonshallcomplex.com) at the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (www.rcsed.ac.uk). The Quincentenary Hall is a new state-of-the-art surgical skills complex in a versatile modern building adjacent to the historic Surgeons’ Hall. The course chairmanship was taken over by Mr Clark Dreghorn (Glasgow) and Mr Andy Kent (Inverness) this year, replacing Mr Chris Oliver and Mr John Keating from the Edinburgh Orthopaedic Trauma Unit who have led the course since its inception in 2004. The faculty is mostly Scottish with surgeons from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Stirling, Paisley, Aberdeen, and Inverness. On this occasion Dr Maarten van der Elst came from the Netherlands as visiting faculty. The course now caters for 48 participants of which half come from Scotland. The AO Principles Course in Scotland has not only allowed the participants to develop skills but has also allowed the Scottish surgeons to become a cohesive force in trauma orthopedic surgery. The high standard of the Scottish training workshops, lectures, and discussion groups has been internationally recognized.

Edinburgh has a long and distinguished history in medicine and surgery, with many advances pioneered in the city or by Edinburgh graduates. Notable surgeons include John Hunter, anatomist and “founder of scientific surgery” in the late 18th century; Robert Liston, who performed the first operation under anesthesia (ether) in 1846; and Sir James Simpson, who discovered chloroform the following year, by testing it on his dinner guests until they slid under the table! Other “firsts” include Charles Bell, who identified the nerve functions in 1811 and founded the science of neurology; James Syme, pioneer of plastic surgery; the first hypodermic syringe (Alexander Wood 1853). In the early days, anatomy students had difficulty obtaining sufficient subjects for dissection, and the need was filled by grave robbers—the “resurrectionists”. In 1829 Messrs Burke and Hare streamlined the process by murdering and then selling their victims directly to the unquestioning university’s surgical department. The pioneering trail continues through Alexander Fleming, discoverer of penicillin (1928) and anti-typhoid vaccines, the UK’s first successful kidney transplant (Michael Woodruff, 1960) and the cloning of the famous Dolly the Sheep (Ian Wilmut, 1996).