Introduction

Trigeminal neuralgia

PETER J. JANNETTA, M.D.

Department of Neurosurgery, Allegheny General Hospital/Drexel University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

There is no question but that one has little or no idea that the work he or she does will be discarded, as is the usual case, or will be thought by someone to be important.

This paper was part of a workshop on the trigeminal nerve held north of Los Angeles when I was chief resident. I had been invited by the organizers to participate. Fortunately Joel Feigenbaum and John Alksne—Joel, a junior resident, and John, Chief of Neurosurgery at Harbor General Hospital—covered for me so that I could participate in this small but important meeting.

I had wonderful support from Bob Rand and John Alksne with this study. Rand, the incomparable misanthrope, started me on this path by asking me to do some anatomical studies of the cranial nerves for teaching purposes. Alksne provided the first patient with trigeminal neuralgia and scrubbed with me. I saw an artery pulsating against the trigeminal nerve in this patient and said, “That’s the cause of the tic.” The work was indeed preliminary but seemed substantial. It seemed, to me anyway, to be of some value. When I first presented the work at a larger meeting, I met for the first time the attitudes of those who did not enjoy, appreciate, or relish change. A few years later, while miserable with the reception to my work, a friend and colleague, Thomas Gill, then Chairman of the Pathology Department at the University of Pittsburgh, gave me a copy of Thomas Kuhn’s The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.1 Thus, I developed some intellectual understanding of the process by which new ideas become assimilated. I always wanted to meet Kuhn but never did. The gray-haired nemesis are now retired or expired. I have great trouble realizing I am one of the old gray heads! I am currently doing new work. It is not very good but the best work I have ever done and look forward to publishing at least some of it in the Journal of Neurosurgery. (DOI: 10.3171/JNS-07/07/0215)

Reference