Neurosurgical Techniques

Introduction

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The impressive increase in the number of talented trainees in neurosurgical programs in North America in the past 20 years naturally has led to a wide distribution of practicing neurosurgeons throughout the United States and Canada. The responsibility for the training of a neurosurgeon rests with the program's director, but once his training is completed the neurosurgeon must keep abreast of the rapidly advancing and frequently changing discipline of neurosurgery. He can do this by reading the appropriate journals and by attending regional and national neurosurgical meetings.

There are many approaches through which the neurosurgeon may be aided. The Harvey Cushing Society is making increasing efforts in this direction and through its Journal of Neurosurgery is moving to assist neurosurgeons in maintaining and increasing their skills.

The Board of Editors of the Journal of Neurosurgery has asked me to edit a section in the Journal on neurosurgical techniques, a series of well illustrated descriptions of operative procedures by selected authorities in the field, all to be bound together in one or more volumes after publication in the Journal.

This is a stimulating challenge, the first fruits of which are now to appear. The order in which these contributions appear in the Journal will bear no relation to the order in the bound volume. The present list of invited contributors is far from complete.

In general, emphasis will be given to the description of established and safe techniques. The editor realizes that a procedure may be done successfully in more than one way. At least one good technique will be described, in the hope that the skilled and experienced surgeon will utilize other methods if they suit his need. Controversial techniques and those not needed in the armamentarium of the practicing neurosurgeon will be considered later in the series when a more mature judgment may permit selection of the best method.

Although some written text will accompany each series of illustrations, the authors have been requested to keep this as brief as possible in order to describe the drawings adequately. In some instances in which details of results may be important to a surgeon in selecting a special operation, a clinical paper by the author may be published in the same issue of the Journal, and a reference made to it in the Neurosurgical Technique but not published in the accumulated volume.

Careful attention has been given to the role of the medical illustrator in these papers. To all medical illustrators who have made drawings a series of guide-lines has been furnished in an attempt to achieve a degree of unity in the quality of illustrations. With permission of the author and the medical illustrator of a particular contribution, occasional alterations have been effected by Mr. George Lynch, Chief Medical Illustrator of the Bowman Gray School of Medicine, to whom special appreciation is due for his valuable guidance.
All contributions have been submitted at my request, but, as is traditional with the Journal, every member of the Board of Editors has reviewed, commented upon, and approved each manuscript. This has resulted in valuable alterations in several instances.

Neurosurgical techniques are evolving rapidly, even more so than in the past, and often the procedure described may not have had its origin with the author. Surgery is a combination of new knowledge with old. Since knowledge is freely shared among surgeons nationally and internationally, original techniques and ideas are passed from teacher to student, from surgeon to surgeon, and altered with changing developments and experience. A procedure well established today may seem naive or useless a few years hence. One can make valid judgments only on the basis of data that is now available. It is planned that this series of papers will keep abreast of changes and hopefully prove useful to neurosurgeons on this continent and abroad.

The artist's drawing of Dr. Cushing's hands was made from the original cast now in the Harvard Medical Museum.