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Table of Contents

Editorial Preface XIII

The Angiographic Evaluation of Ventricular Size in the Hydrocephalic Newborn
A.J. Raimondi (Chicago, Ill.)

Introduction 1
The Angiographic Diagnosis of Ventricular Enlargement 3
The Angiographic Characteristics of Internal Hydrocephalus 29
Communicating Hydrocephalus 29
Occlusion of One Foramen of Monro 30
Aqueductal Stenosis 35
Atresia of the Foramina of Luschka and Magendie: The Dandy-Walker Cyst 36
The Arnold-Chiari Malformation 42
Hydranencephaly 45
Aneurysm of the Vein of Galen 48
References 50

Radioactive Isotopes as a Diagnostic Aid in Pediatric Neurosurgery
P. Paoletti and R. Villani (Milano)

Introduction 54
Brain Scanning 55
Isotopes, Apparatuses and Radiation Dosimetry 55
Brain Tumors 60
Head Injuries 74
Encephalitides 78
Cerebrovascular Diseases 81
Intracranial Leukemic Infiltrations 82
Other Neurological Disorders 82
Cerebrospinal Fluid Circulation in Hydrocephalic Babies 83
Technique of Examination 85
Malformations in Structures of the Posterior Fossa
W.Driesen and H. Schmidt (Tübingen)

Introduction 102
I. History 103
A. Clinical Significance of Dislocation in Craniocervical Malformations 104
B. Commencement of Surgical Treatment 105
II. X-Ray Diagnosis 107
A. Skeletal Findings 107
B. Platybasia 107
C. ‘Basilar Impression’ 109
D. Atlas Assimilation and Accompanying Skeletal Variants 110
E. Angiographic Findings III
F. Pneumoencephalographic Findings 111
III. The Neurologic Syndrome, its Pathogenesis and Differential Diagnosis 112
A. Anatomic Foundations 113
B. Neurologic Symptoms 113
  1. Compression of the Upper Cervical Region of the Spinal Cord 114
  2. Cerebellar Symptoms 114
  3. Defects of Caudal Cranial Nerves 114
C. Pathogenesis of the Clinical Picture 115
  1. Dysraphic Disturbances 116
  2. Chiari Malformation 116
D. Clinical Differential Diagnosis 118
IV. Neurosurgical Therapy and Operative Findings 119
A. Operative Technique 119
B. Mortality and Morbidity 124
V. Results of Postoperative Examinations 124
A. Changes of Symptomatology 126
References 127
Meningoceles and Myeloceles
R. Hemmer (Freiburg i. Br.)

Etiology 193
Meningoceles 194
Operative Technique 195

Myeloceles 198
Clinical Picture. Development of Hydrocephalus 201
Indications for Operation 204
Rationale of Early Operation 206
Operative Technique 207
Freeing up the Sac 207
Closure of the Skin Defect 208
Post-Operative Care 214
Late Results. Prognosis 218
Urinary and Fecal Incontinence 220
Hydrocephalus 222
Cortical Thickness 222
Acknowledgements 224
References 225

VIII Table of Contents

Syringohydromyelia
H. T. Ballantine, Jr., R. G. Ojemann and J. H. Drew (Boston, Mass.)

Introduction 227
Origin and Current Usage of the Term Syringomyelia 229
Pathology and Pathogenesis 230
‘True’ Syringomyelia 230
Hydromyelia 232
Syringohydromyelia 233
‘Acquired’ Syringomyelia 234

The Syndromes of Syringohydromyelia and Acquired Cavitation 234
Therapy of Congenital Hydrocephalus in Infancy
B. Pertuiset (Paris)

Introduction 290
Destruction of Choroid Plexuses 290
Intracranial Shunts 291
Shunts without Mechanical Tubes 291
Shunts with Mechanical Tubes 292
Ventriculo-cisternostomy 292
Ventriculo-transcallosal Shunt 293
Ventriculo-transcallosal Cistern Ambiens Shunt 293
Ventriculo-chiasmatic Cistern Shunt 293
Third to Fourth Ventricle Shunt 293
Ventriculo-subdural Shunt 293
Ventriculo-mastoid Shunt 293
Extracranial Shunts 294
Ventriculo-pleural Shunts 294
Ventriculo-peritoneal Shunts 294
Ventriculo-cholecystostomy 295
Ventriculo-salpingostomy 295
Lumbar Arachnoid-ileostomy 295
Other Rare Shunts 295
Ureteral Shunts 296
Ventriculo-cardiac Shunts 297
  1. Material 297
  2. Surgical Procedure 300
  3. Postoperative Care 306
  4. Complications 309
  5. Evolution 316
  6. Results of Various Techniques 318
  7. Choice of the Therapeutic Procedure 320
References 323

Radiology of Spinal Cord Arteriovenous Malformations
G. Dr Chiro, J. L. Doppman and A. K. Ommaya (Bethesda, Md.)
Introduction 329
Radiographic Findings 330
Plain X-Rays 330
Myelography 330
Spinal Cord Angiography (Selective Arteriography) 335
Angiographic Types of Arteriovenous Malformations 342
Angiographic Differential Diagnosis 346
Preoperative Angiography 349

Table of Contents

Postoperative Angiography 350
Azygography 350
Embolization 350
Work in Progress 352
References 353
Addendum 354

Diagnosis and Treatment of Spinal Cord Arteriovenous Malformations
M. G. Yasargil (Zürich)

Introduction 356
History 356
Incidence 357
Age and Sex Incidence 358
Localization 359
Form and Extent of the Malformation 361
Histology 362
Pathogenesis 363
Associated Malformations 365
Natural History 366
Differential Diagnosis 368
Clinical Findings 369
Cerebrospinal Fluid Findings 369
Queckenstedt Test 369
Ancillary Investigations : Auscultation 370
Radiological Findings 370
Plain X-Rays of the Spine 370
Other Radiological Signs 371
Myelography 371
Pantopaque Myelography 372
Air Myelography 374
Angiography 375
Transosseous Phlebography 375
Vertebral Angiography 376
Aortography 377
The rate of increase of new knowledge in neurological surgery and related fields continues to evoke a spate of publications unreadable by any one person who is at the same time pursuing an active clinical career taking care of sick people. Indeed, the avalanche of literature throughout the
whole field of biology has precipitated such a feeling of despair among many scientists, that less rather than more reading of original scientific articles may be occurring. Our own distinguished neuroscientist and neurosurgeon Professor Lars Leksell, summarized this lugubrious attitude in a terse aphorism at the August 1970 meeting of the Scandinavian Neurosurgical Society in Stockholm—namely, ‘If you want to conceal what you are doing, publish it.’

Whatever sting of truth this witticism may have for the bulk of biologists in general and neurosurgeons in particular, it is our fervent hope that precisely the reverse has proven to be the case vis-à-vis the approach taken by the distinguished men who have contributed the chapters to this volume and are writing those in the volumes to come. The objectives of each author have been and remain: 1) a comprehensive followup study of his own clinical material and that in his clinic on the topic he is considering; 2) an exhaustive search of the world literature in all languages in the same subject; and most importantly 3) a critical distillation of what is valuable for theory and practice as judged by his experience and reading. Acceptance of such an assignment by every author has involved a major commitment of time and intellectual stamina; the editors are grateful to each of them for their willingness to respond positively to such an invitation. Confronted by the demands of his other local, national and international obligations, the final product of each essayist may or may not reach the standard he set for himself. If we editors may venture to extrapolate from our experience we should say that each author has these feelings. When the completed manuscript finally leaves his hands, he has misgivings which are compounded of uncertainty as to whether this type of effort

XIV

really represented the best use of this time, and of concern lest his work and analyses fail to do justice to his subject. These misgivings experienced by some authors are groundless, whereas in the case of others they are not without foundation.

The task of an individual who contributes to a volume with multiple authorship is usually quite literally thankless. Yet, if we practicing neurosurgeons are to get our advice from the men of broadest experience and soundest judgment, the subjects must be morcelled into fragments of size manageable for evaluation by one busy neurosurgical team. Hence we continue to divide a general subject and its volume into numerous chapters, each of separate authorship. We strongly urge the readers to provide ‘feedback’ to these authors. Please tell those whose work you applaud and have been helped by; the thanks will buoy them up—might
even encourage them to accept the invitation to write another of these burdensome chapters for another volume! And please make known to those and other authors your constructive criticisms and the experiences which lead you to disagree with them. The editors too would be grateful for advice on proper subjects for volumes in the near future, suggestions for contributors of specific chapters, and any thoughts as to how the volumes may be made more useful to the primary audience for which they are written, i.e. practicing neurosurgeons. Our addresses are printed below further to encourage a letter from you.

Our final paragraph in this preface conveys our own very special thanks to Dr. R. Lewis Wright. This is his fourth and last volume as assistant editor, a role he has performed with extraordinary diligence. He and his wife Sarah have rendered more readable and more comprehensible every line in nearly every chapter of the 4 volumes. Especially those chapters sent to us in English by authors with some other native tongue required not only editorial effort but also at times minor surgery for the meaning to be presented in idiomatic English. We in Boston are missing both of the Wrights and wishing them well in their present more exclusively clinical activities.

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