Audio-Vestibular System and Facial Nerve

Advances in
Oto-Rhino-Laryngology

Vol. 22

Editor
C. R. PFALTZ, Basel

S. Karger Basel Mnchen Paris London New York Sydney

Audio-Vestibular
System and Facial Nerve

Liber-Amicorum in Honour of L. B. W. Jongkees

Editor
W.J. OOSTERVELD, Amsterdam

119 figures and 19 tables, 1977

S. Karger Basel Mnchen Paris London New York Sydney

Advances in Oto-Rhino-Laryngology

J. E. HAWKINS, jr., M. LAWRENCE and W. P. WORK (Ann Arbor, Mich.).

Cataloging in Publication
Audio-vestibular system and facial nerve:
liber-amicorum in honour of L. B. W. Jongkees
Editor: W. J. Oosterveld, Basel, New York, Karger, 1977
(Advances in oto-rhino-laryngology, v. 22)
I. Oosterveld, W. J., ed. II. Jongkees, L. B. W.
W1 AD701 v. 22/WV 270 A912

ISBN 3-8055-2354-8
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At the beginning of July 1975, a group of scientists and clinicians from all over the world assembled in Amsterdam for a special meeting. It was organized in honour of LEONARD B. W. JONGKEES, who celebrated his 5th lustrum of devoted work at the University of Amsterdam. The general subject of this Symposium was the tripod on which are based most of his important scientific and clinical activities: the facial nerve, the auditory and the vestibular system.

A system has been defined as an assembly of elements economically organized to perform of a given function or functions. In the case of the vestibular system the elements correspond, respectively, with the semi-circular
canals, the otolith organs and the central processing, subserving spatial orientation. For this reason, morphological and physiological problems must include these three anatomical substrata and their functional interplay. The papers presented at the Symposium reflect this complex situation: morphology of the vestibular sensory organs, the interaction of the visual and vestibular system, the role of the cerebral cortex, central compensation of peripheral dysfunction and vestibular habituation were discussed, but a great number of questions had to be left open, or lead to new ones.

In the case of the auditory system the basic elements correspond, respectively, with the cochlea, the spiral ganglion, auditory nerve and again the central processing, subserving acoustic information. Most of the papers reflect this equally complex situation in the field of hearing research: the complicated interaction between physics, morphology, biochemistry, physiology, pathophysiology and psychology.

The third part of this Symposium was dedicated to the facial nerve: borderland between neuro-anatomy, neuro-physiology, neurology and otology.

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Normal function of the seventh cranial nerve is the underlying neurophysiological mechanism of mimic expression, one of the most important features of animal and human behaviour. Any disorder of the coordination of mimic function will result in disfigurement and may even cause a behavioural disturbance. Most of the papers are dealing with diagnostic and therapeutic procedures, subserving the restoration of facial nerve function. The main goal of this meeting was to review concepts and theories, to exchange information and knowledge in an atmosphere of true friendship. Since this goal has been achieved we thought it would be worth-while to publish the scientific and clinical papers presented at this Symposium, in order to provide better information to a greater public, interested in these particular borderlands of otology, thus honouring our friend LEONARD B. W. JONGKEES, to whom we owe so much in the field of clinical and scientific otolaryngology.

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