Foreword to the First Edition

Writing a book at the beginning of the 21st century about interventional neuroradiology, still widely known as "endovascular neurosurgery," is an extraordinarily risky bet. It is therefore worth trying to determine whether the authors of this book, under the direction of Karel ter Brugge, have successfully met the challenge that they have set for themselves. Those wishing to disseminate specialized personal knowledge should not only be highly skilled in their specific field but also and especially have the maturity that comes only with wide experience. Timo Krings, Sasikhan Geibprasert, and Karel ter Brugge are core members of Pierre L. Lasjaunias' famous school, and benefit from the vast experience they have obtained by working under his direction. The expertise of this team is thus innately based on exceptional radioanatomical and clinical foundations as well as on very human qualities that combine scientific rigor, honesty, and ethics.

Given the irreproachable quality of the information conveyed by such an elite team, globally esteemed and respected as they are, we may yet consider the technique that they have utilized in its presentation. Indeed, in this Internet era, with its capacity for the extraordinarily rapid, even "instant," transmission of information, the continuing relevance of the traditional printed paper medium book may be brought into question. Compared to scientific journals and especially information rendered on a website, the lag inherent to the printed book format can contribute to the rapid obsolescence of the information that is being presented. This is especially true since the continuing evolution of interventional neuroradiology is itself extraordinarily rapid. Closely dependent on technological progress, interventional neuroradiology takes a quantum leap forward with each technological innovation.

The techniques of endovascular interventional neuroradiology have evolved steadily toward ever smaller applications and the emergence of the third dimension has radically transformed their precision and thus the safety of our interventions. The miniaturization of our surgical instruments has greatly contributed to our progress and the ongoing development of nanotechnology will very likely enable further innovations that are even harder to visualize today.

It is in this particularly difficult context that the brilliance of this book's design stands out. Its major importance lies in the fact that it is actually not a traditional textbook, as the authors have clearly taken the gamble of trying to stimulate personal reflection on the reader's part. The chapters are in fact a succession of carefully described and analyzed observations that consequently require a direct and thoughtful participation. On reading these various observations, which range over virtually the entire field of vascular pathology, the reader is challenged to methodically ask himself or herself the key questions that absolutely must be answered before choosing a therapeutic approach. Selecting the optimum strategy, that is, the one that is most effective and least hazardous to the patient, is unquestionably the core of the therapeutic process. Confronted with daily reality, the reader is thus constantly forced to practice selecting the best indication as well as the most appropriate therapeutic technique.

Technical knowledge is indeed indispensable, but it is insufficient alone for successful implementation without an exacting intellectual process. Given that there are frequently multiple therapeutic possibilities, the approaches advocated by the authors are not didactically imposed but are carefully argued and thus manifestly well justified, admirably demonstrating the authors' excellent instructional abilities. This orientation of the book's content is crucial, because at the present time the poor quality of therapeutic indications chosen by many surgical teams around the world is certainly the Achilles' heel of early 21st century interventional neuroradiology.

This overarching concern for the proper choice of therapeutic indications is highlighted by the authors' honesty and courage in describing the complications that can arise even within the best teams. These observations, carefully selected, analyzed, and described will enable readers to become aware of the actual risks to which patients are exposed, as they learn at the same time to make a timely diagnosis and take appropriate measures to best mitigate any adverse consequences.

In the same vein, this book is remarkable for its rational approach in the deepest sense of the word. Indeed, ongoing development is so rapid due to the continual introduction of new surgical instruments that the top teams lack sufficient time to properly assess the actual clinical outcomes of their interventions. This is why many procedures are being performed to "experiment" with new and apparently improved surgical instruments, whereas we know very well that the outcomes of clinical developments in the medium and long term can be mediocre or even frankly poor despite "satisfactory radioanatomic controls."

It is noteworthy that the authors have also taken on the challenge of covering virtually the entire spectrum of pathological conditions accessible to treatment by interventional neuroradiology. Their discriminating choice of observations has enabled them to cover practically all the situations encountered, even the most difficult ones. The systematic nature of the book's organization enables the reader to find information quickly on any given observation. Of course, this leads to some repetition, but we know that repetition of important elements is the basis of a well-organized course of instruction. The sections entitled "Pearls and Pitfalls" are highly relevant.

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For example, when the authors write that skin disinfection is an essential step for infiltration or intraspinal injections, it should not be taken lightly, because it is absolutely true. The repetition of "minor" steps in a protocol can lead to overfamiliarity and make us forget the need for their rigorous application. Many readers will also appreciate the bibliographical references, available for each clinical case, which provide immediate references relevant to the case being considered.

This book thus perfectly reflects the immense clinical, radioanatomical, technical, and human qualities of the team of Timo Krings, Sasikhan Geibprasert, and Karel ter Brugge. It is therefore not only useful but also, in my opinion, really essential that all those wishing to train in interventional neuroradiology read and reread this book, taking time for contemplation as needed, in order to gradually reach the level of maturity indispensable to the practice of this exciting but extremely difficult specialization. When making a difficult decision, many practitioners will benefit from reading the chapter that corresponds to the case at hand, and they will certainly find it helpful in reaching their decision. This book will most certainly contribute to the improvement of outcomes in interventional neuroradiology.

I would therefore like to congratulate the authors and thank them warmly for making this resource for training and development available to all those with an interest in brain and spinal pathology. It will enable them to make real progress in providing the patients in their care with the greatest possible benefit.

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