Foreword

I write this foreword with mingled pleasure and reluctance. Pleasure, because I have listened to and watched Walter Jean's presentations and videos, and he has convinced me that many of his approaches, when meticulously executed, are appropriate for the specific cases that he demonstrates. Reluctance, because I fear that, in attempting to minimize the size of exposures, the surgeon may have inadequate room for manipulating microsurgical instruments with appropriate dexterity. I worry that, even with angled scopes and instruments, lesion extirpation may be compromised or risk enhanced by not being able to see the extent of a tumor around a corner.

I am, however, an admirer of pushing the surgical envelope. I believe in limiting exposures to the bare minimum, and I am committed to maximal resection of tumors, arteriovenous malformations, and other lesions. This volume dramatically demonstrates the leading edge of endoscopic and minimal approaches. Readers need to use their own judgment to determine whether, in their hands, these approaches are appropriate and fulfill our most important mission—to provide the patient with the best and safest surgery for whatever the problem may be. I congratulate the authors on their demonstrated skill in pushing our surgical frontiers, in keeping with the work of all past and future neurosurgical pioneers to improve our neurosurgical art.

Robert F. Spetzler, MD
JN Harbor Chairperson Emeritus
Department of Neurosurgery
Director Emeritus
Barrow Neurological Institute
St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center
Phoenix, Arizona, USA

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Foreword

Progress in medicine is often measured in incremental steps, particularly in high-stakes disciplines such as neurosurgery. Change tends to come slowly—understandably so, given the complexity and risks involved. Yet this caution raises an important question: why have techniques that have proven effective in reducing risk in other surgical fields been adopted so hesitantly in neurosurgery? In specialties such as cardiac surgery, minimally invasive approaches have long since become standard. What makes neurosurgery different?

After more than three decades of clinical practice focused on this very question—and thousands of endoscopic and minimally invasive neurosurgical procedures—the most convincing explanation I can offer is this: there are still far too few dedicated training centers for minimally invasive neurosurgery (MINS) worldwide. By "training," I mean not just the transfer of theoretical knowledge, but the structured and continuous education in anatomical principles, equipment and instrument handling, surgical approaches, procedural techniques, and exit strategies. Above all, what is needed is broad professional acceptance, a positive mindset, and strong support from the global neurosurgical community. Unfortunately, that support remains limited. Even today, neurosurgeons who specialize in minimally invasive techniques are often regarded as outliers.

The perspective is quite different when speaking with patients. Their responses are overwhelmingly positive. While some neurosurgeons may still ask, "Why operate through such small openings and accept limited exposure that might compromise safety or efficiency?", patients typically pose the opposite question: "Why choose a standard open procedure when a minimally invasive approach can achieve the same—or better—results with less trauma?" It is a valid question, and one that deserves serious reflection.

Today, the pioneers of MINS have largely stepped back from clinical work, and the first generation of their trainees—those who adopted MINS from the beginning of their careers—are now entering the later stages of theirs. I count myself among them and consider it a privilege to have worked side by side for over a decade with Axel Perneczky, one of the pioneers of MINS. It is deeply gratifying to see the ongoing evolution of neurosurgery: technically, conceptually, and—thankfully—also in the slow but steady growth of the global MINS community.

This book is a significant contribution to the advancement of MINS. I am confident that MINS will one day become the standard of care in our field. I am equally pleased that the authors have succeeded in bringing together such a remarkable group of forward-thinking and highly skilled colleagues from the second and third generations of the MINS movement—making their expertise available to a broader audience. Once one has set out on this path, there is only one direction forward.

Nikolai J. Hopf, MD (USMLE)
Professor of Neurosurgery
Director
Center for Neurosurgery
Endoscopic & Minimally Invasive Neurosurgery
Klinik Hirslanden
Zurich, Switzerland

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