

History of neuroendoscopy

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The insertion of tubes into the body for either the deliverance of a therapy or diagnostic purposes has taken place throughout recorded medicine. The first documented instance of the use of a tube to inspect the rectum was in Hippocrates' time. Natural light was used to illuminate the field [1]. The Babylonians described using vaginal speculums in 500 AD, with illumination being provided by ambient light [2]. Abulkaism (980–1037) and Giulio Cesare Aranzi (1530–1589) reported on the use of mirrors to reflect ambient light down their “endoscopic” tubes to allow for the inspection of deeper body cavities [3]. In 1805, the Alert Faculty in Vienna heard Philippe Bozzini's report on an instrument he had developed, which used candle light reflected by a concave mirror for the inspection of the bladder and rectum [4]. They were not impressed, censoring Bozzini for his inappropriate curiosity and rejecting the “magic lantern.”

In 1867, Antonin Desormeaux published a description of an endoscope whose illumination had been improved by using an alcohol and kerosene burning candle with a chimney [5]. The light this candle generated was collected and focused down the shaft of the scope using a lens. This was to be the first successful design for a cystoscope, and it was presented to the Academy of Medicine in Paris. Shortly thereafter, there were several reports of therapeutic uses for endoscopes. First, Bevan reported on successfully using an endoscope to extract foreign material from the esophagus, and Pantaleoni then reported on using a scope to inspect the uterus of a woman bothered by postmenopausal bleeding, discovering an intrauterine polyp and cauterizing it with silver

nitrate [4]. In 1870, Kussmaul demonstrated using a rigid scope to inspect the stomach [5]. The assistance of a professional sword swallower was required for this, however.

All these described systems suffered from a lack of magnification. They were simply tubes that directed illumination down to their distal tip. In 1879, Max Nitze described the first system that contained a series of lens [6]. Working with several opticians, he described a scope with an illumination source to the distal tip, a platinum wire that glowed when current was conducted through it. The light produced was then projected through a prism. This wire produced heat, however, necessitating a water coolant system. Shortly thereafter, Edison invented the light bulb, and Newman then described modifying Nitze's scope in 1883 by substituting a small light bulb at the distal tip for the platinum wire [7]. Boisseau du Rocher was the next to modify the system by fabricating an outer sheath to contain the telescope, reporting on this in 1889 [4]. This modification allowed the surgeon to interchange different scopes during a procedure without having to renavigate through the body to the working site.

By the turn of the century, the promise of endoscopy had been demonstrated, but its acceptance was slowed because of the poor illumination. Indeed, Pantaleoni's students remarked on not being able to appreciate his work, claiming an inability to see anything with his hysteroscope [4]. The light source evolved during the first half of the twentieth century, and by 1950, it consisted of a tungsten bulb at the distal tip of the scope [8]. Even this was inadequate, providing poor illumination and significant color distortion. In large part, these difficulties were the result of design flaws inherent in the Nitze endoscope design (ie,

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a telescope containing a series of lens housed in an air-filled tube) [9]. The conduction of light in an endoscope is a function of the refractory index of the conducting medium, in this case, air. The refractory index is defined as the difference in the speed of light conduction in a vacuum and the medium in question. As it turns out, the refractory index for glass is 1.5 times greater than that for air. Harold Hopkins, a British optical physicist, used this observation to construct a new endoscope designed to improve on light conduction. His scope interchanged glass for air and vice versa, resulting in a series of “air lens” housed in a glass tube, or a series of glass rods. Not only did this result in an increase in the system’s refractory index but also in an increase in the scope’s field of view because of a decrease in spherical aberration at the perimeter of the lens (thus increasing the lens’s light gathering capacity). The net gain in light transmission of Hopkins’ scope design over Nitze’s design was ninefold. Hopkins also used coating on the lens to minimize refraction of light at the lens interface with the glass rods and calculated the layout of the lens to eliminate ghosting and chromatic distortion in addition to further increasing light transmission. With these improvements, serious attention could be given to using scopes within the human body, such as the brain’s ventricles, where ambient light could not be directed.

An additional problem with the Nitze design was the heat generated by its illumination source housed at the distal tip of the scope. The answer seemed to be using a light generator outside of the body and conducting the light down to the distal tip. The first report of use of an external light source was by Fourestier, Bladu, and Valmier in 1952, when a scope design was described where light was transmitted down a quartz rod from the scope’s external light source [8]. This transmitted enough light to make endoscopic photography possible. An improvement on this shortly followed based on work done by Heinrich Lamm in 1932 [4]. At that time, Lamm had demonstrated that light could be conducted through a bundle of glass fibers. In 1954, Harold Hopkins picked up on this idea and with a colleague, N.S. Kapany, discussed applying this finding to design a more effective light conducting system [10]. They described two types of fiber bundles, so-called “incoherent” and “coherent” bundles. Incoherent bundles referred to bundles of glass fibers whose orientation with neighbors was chaotic or without order. This

type of bundle could be used to transmit light for illumination. Conversely, a coherent bundle maintained the orientation of fibers through its length so that any given fiber would maintain its exact orientation to its neighbors throughout the length of the bundle. This type of bundle could be used to transmit an image from one end of the bundle to the other. Hopkins and Kapany observed that this type of bundle could be used in the design of a “flexible” endoscope whose shaft could be bent to a degree and still allow for the conduction of an image from one end of the scope to the other. In the same issue of *Nature*, there was a paper describing a technique for coating the fibers to minimize loss of light and degradation of image quality [5].

Hirschowitz visited Hopkins’ laboratory shortly after the publication of his paper in 1954 and was impressed with the promise of the observations made by Hopkins and Kapany [5]. He returned to the University of Michigan, where he collaborated with Wilbur Peters and Lawrence Curtiss to develop a fiberoptic gastroscope. By the end of 1956, Curtiss had developed a glass coating for the optical fibers that was permanently adherent and capable of conducting an image for over a meter. In January 1957, they completed construction of their first fiberoptic gastroscope. The next month, it was used to inspect a gastric ulcer in the wife of a dental student. Within 3 years, a commercial fiberoptic endoscope, American Cystoscope Makers’ No. 4990 (American Cystoscope Makers, New York, NY), became available. By 1962, Hirschowitz was able to publish a series of 500 gastroesophageal endoscopies.

In 1963, Guiot described an endoscope developed for intracranial work that had a powerful external light source whose illumination was conducted via a quartz rod to the scope’s distal tip [9]. This allowed for color photography of the ventricle. That same year Scarff described improving his ventriculoscope by substituting a “fiber lighting” system with an external light source for the previously used incandescent bulb at the scope’s distal tip [9]. In 1983, the Welch Allyn Company (Skaneateles Falls, NY) released the first endoscope with the charged couple device, allowing for conduction of a high-quality image from the scope to a television screen [5]. Other companies quickly followed with miniaturization of the scopes, resulting in an improved ability to document and teach. The ability to introduce rigid and flexible endoscopes into the body and to obtain good-quality images was thus established.

As the use of endoscopes for diagnostic purposes increased, not surprisingly, so too did the desire to render therapy. In 1887, Felix M. Oberländer described the first scope designed to treat postgonorrheal strictures [6]. The scope allowed for direct visualization of the urethra and contained an instrument channel allowing for the introduction of various knives for cutting the strictures under direct vision. In 1910, L'Espinasse reported to a local medical society in Chicago on the use a cystoscope to fulgurate the choroid plexus in two infants with hydrocephalus [11]. One child died immediately after surgery, but the other lived for 5 years; thus was reported the first therapeutic neuroendoscopic case. Erich Wossidlo, a German urologist, reported on using a galvanocautic hook to treat urethral strictures [6]. In 1937, Ruddock introduced a scope that contained an electrocautery unit and biopsy forceps as well as ancillary biopsy instruments for use in the peritoneal cavity [12]. In 1939, Crafoord and Frenckner described using sclerotherapy to treat esophageal varices [4]. In the 1970s, lasers were introduced into the armamentarium of medicine. In 1973, Nath and his colleagues [13] experimentally used an Nd:YAG laser fiber with an endoscope to demonstrate its feasibility. Two years later, Frühmorgen et al [14] reported on its use on a patient.

Although not as aggressive as some specialists, neurosurgeons have been actively engaged in the development of endoscopic applications for the central nervous system. As mentioned earlier, L'Espinasse first described use of the endoscope in the central nervous system in 1910. In 1922, Dandy [15] reported performing an endoscopic choroid plexectomy after a previously reported experience in performing open choroid plexectomy on four patients. The attempt to perform the endoscopic choroid plexectomy was unsuccessful, and he did not attempt any further such cases. The next year, Fay and Grant [16] reported on successfully photographing the interior of the ventricles of a hydrocephalic child. The fact that a 40-second exposure was required speaks to the rather poor illumination available at that time. In the same year, Mixter [17] performed the first successful endoscopic third ventriculostomy using a cystoscope. This did not gain acceptance, presumably because of the poor visualization. In 1932, Dandy [18] reported on using a cystoscope to remove the choroid plexus. His results were similar to those experienced when he did the surgery via a formal craniotomy. Shortly there-

after, Putnam [19] reported on the effectiveness of simply cauterizing the choroid plexus using a scope of his design. Scarff [20] then wrote a paper on his experience in developing a ventriculoscope that allowed cauterization of the choroid plexus. He went on to develop a scope that contained a movable electrode for cauterization of the plexus. In 1943, Putnam [21] reported on performing endoscopic choroid plexectomy on 42 patients. There were 10 (25%) perioperative deaths. Fifteen of the patients failed to respond to the treatment, but 17 experienced success in relief of their intracranial hypertension. In 1970, Scarff [22] reviewed all available series of endoscopic choroid plexus cauterization for the treatment of hydrocephalus. Of 95 patients so treated, 14 (15%) had died, whereas 52 (60%) had initial successful results. Scarff also looked at his patients (39 of the 95 patients) at more than 5 years after their surgery and found that 7 had died of causes unrelated to their hydrocephalus and the rest required no further treatment. More recently, Bucholz and Pittman [23] reported on using the Nd:YAG laser to cauterize the choroid plexus of a shunted infant with ascites, effectively decreasing cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) production by 50%. Pople and Griffith [24] commented on their 20-year experience treating 156 individuals with choroid plexus cauterization, finding a 35% long-term success rate.

As stated earlier, Guiot reported on an endoscope with a powerful external light source sufficient to allow for color photography of the ventricle. Guiot reported on using this system to perform third ventriculostomy. The difficulty with his system was its diameter, 9.1 mm. This prevented a wider use of his scope, and Guiot ultimately ceased performing third ventriculostomy with his instrument. Vries [25] described his experience with five hydrocephalic patients on whom he performed endoscopic third ventriculostomies in 1978. Although he showed that the procedure was technically feasible, none of his patients remained without a shunt over the long term. Jones et al [26] reported a different experience in 1990, describing a 50% success rate in long-term management of hydrocephalus in 24 patients who underwent a third ventriculostomy. Modern series have improved on this figure, with most now reporting 60% to 90% long-term success with the technique [27–33].

Neurosurgeons have used endoscopes for other indications in the central nervous system. In 1938, Pool [34] reported on using an endoscope, termed

a *myeloscope*, to visualize dorsal nerve roots of the cauda equina. Several years later, he described using the instrument to view the spinal cord and its conus. In 1990, the group at Hôpital Necker in Paris described their evolution in the treatment of suprasellar arachnoidal cysts [35]. From first performing stereotactically guided fenestration of the cyst, they moved to performing the procedure endoscopically. Others have reported on endoscopically fenestrating other arachnoidal cysts [36–41].

Although technically more challenging, the endoscope can be used to fenestrate other intraventricular cysts such as arise after severe ventriculitis. In 1986, Powers [42] described two infants with postinfectious multicystic ventricles who he managed using a flexible endoscope and argon laser. He was able to fenestrate the cysts into the ventricles successfully and cure the lingering infections. In 1992, Zamorano et al described using a stereotactically guided endoscope to treat cystic ventricles and other entities [64]. The endoscope has also been used to assist in the evacuation of intracranial hematomas [43–45]. The greatest success has been with chronic hematomas, but surgeons have described attacking even acute clots [11,46,47].

There are now numerous reports in the literature of the successful biopsying or removal of intracranial mass lesions endoscopically. In 1983, Powell et al [48] first reported on the removal of a colloid cyst using the endoscope. There have been many reports since [40,49–51,53], and in 1994, Lewis et al [52] showed that this type of resection required less surgical time and postoperative convalescence for their patients. Fukushima [54] reported on using a flexible endoscope to biopsy tumors in 1978. Many have reported similar success over the past several decades [55–60]. Endoscopic surgery has also been used to manage cystic tumors, such as cranio-pharyngiomas, fenestrating the cysts into ventricles or cisternal spaces [61–65]. One particular successful application for the neuroendoscope has been to biopsy pineal region tumors when performing third ventriculostomies to treat the associated hydrocephalus [66,67]. There has been one report, however, of secondary seeding of the endoscope's tract after such a biopsy [68]. As early as 1979, surgeons reported on using the endoscope to resect pituitary lesions, and this has become extremely popular over the last decade [65,69–81]. Finally, there are several surgeons investigating the utility of using an endoscope as an assisting set of eyes when performing microneurosurgery

[60,61]. This has allowed for a much narrower surgical corridor and for the surgeon to “look around corners” or on the back side of structures, such as arteries. Fries and Perneczky [11] have also spoken of improved appreciation of micro-anatomy not apparent with the microscope.

Other applications are finding their way into the literature as neurosurgeons gain comfort in using endoscopic equipment. Jimenez and Barone [82,83] have reported on using the endoscope to perform sagittal strip craniectomies in conjunction with molding helmets for the treatment of scaphocephaly. As early as 1993, neurosurgeons reported on using endoscopes to perform thoracic sympathectomies in a minimally invasive fashion [84–89]. In 1994, Schaffer [90] reported on resection of an intervertebral disk using an endoscope, and several surgeons have described using the endoscope to perform various spinal surgeries since [91–95].

It seems clear that the endoscope is a unique tool and that it has a place in the armamentarium of the modern neurosurgeon. Its applications will only broaden as we gain instrumentation and experience in using this system.

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