
The author has followed his monograph on lesions of the lumbar intervertebral discs, published in 1953, with one dealing with the same lesion in the cervical portion of the spine. The new volume, like the earlier one, is beautifully produced and illustrated and clearly sets out the author's views based on a series of 197 cases of cervical intervertebral disc protrusion. The history of the development of knowledge of these protrusions is reviewed and the anatomy of the cervical spine carefully described. The pathological changes are reviewed, and due attention is given to the normal reparative processes after injury. In the matter of nomenclature the distinction between a localised protrusion of disc tissue and diffuse osteophytosis is rightly emphasised; however for some reason the unfortunate term "hard disc" is used to describe osteophytosis confined to a single intervertebral joint when localised osteophytosis or localised spondylosis would surely be preferable. Much confusion has already arisen in the literature from the use of the term cervical disc protrusion to describe cases of spondylosis, localised or diffuse, and the inaccurate expression "hard disc" can only add to this.

The clinical features and diagnosis of cervical disc protrusions are fully discussed. It is emphasised that cord compression by a median cervical disc protrusion may be associated with little abnormality in the upper limbs. Therefore in the spastic paraplegic with severe disturbance of gait, little upper limb dysfunction and no cranial nerve involvement, extensive investigation, including myelography, is required before a diagnosis of an untreatable degenerative disease is made. The radiological examination of the patient—including myelography—is carefully described, the latter being important not only in the diagnosis of median protrusions causing cord compression, but also in the case of lateral protrusions with radicular compression. Myelography is performed in the latter cases because clinical signs may indicate another level than that affected and because localised osteophytosis may be present at one level while the disc protrusion occurs at another which appears normal on plain films.

In considering therapy the author emphasises his conservative attitude. All patients except those with a severe neurological deficit are treated in the first place with intermittent cervical traction, usually by means of a halter and occasionally by skull traction. However, it is noteworthy that, when this does not relieve pain and the signs of root compression within forty-eight hours, conservative treatment is said to have failed and surgery is advised. The technique of surgical management is described in detail, a unilateral approach being employed in cases of radicular compression and a full laminectomy in cases with cord compression. Of the sixty-one surgically treated cases the result of operation was considered excellent in 73.7 per cent, good in 16.3 per cent and poor in 10 per cent. Of the 136 cases in which conservative treatment alone was employed the result was regarded as excellent in 65 per cent, good in 30 per cent and poor in 3.6 per cent. It seems therefore from the author's figures that the results of even a very short period of conservative treatment fall but little short of those following surgical intervention. Since the author states that the specimen removed at operation "consists of nothing more than a few strands of dehydrated nucleus pulposus" it would seem that conservative treatment merits a more prolonged trial in all cases of lateral cervical disc protrusion causing radicular symptoms and signs only. Certainly the approach to this problem of most neurological surgeons in this country is far more conservative than that of Dr Spurling and others in the United States to whom he refers.

This monograph is of course a record of the author's personal approach to the problem of lesions of the cervical intervertebral discs and its value is the greater for stating this in unequivocal terms. It should be read by all interested in the subject.—J. E. A. O'Connell.


One would think that a new edition of "Böhler" must be welcome. Many who were no more than students in the early 'thirties remember the impact of the teaching of the first few editions, and the way in which the Böhler doctrines and the Böhler technique revolutionised fracture treatment in many hospitals. The first edition was published in German in 1929. The English translation appeared in the same year. It contained 185 pages. It was exciting, not merely interesting. In small compass it laid the emphasis on accurate anatomical reduction, on sound wound surgery, on the