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CNS Metastases
Neurosurgery in the Aged

Edited by
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Preface and the President's Opening Remarks and Address to the Delegates of the 34th Annual Meeting of the German Neurosurgical Society

W. Piotrowski

Distinguished guests and colleagues,

It is a great honor for me, and at the same time a great pleasure, to be able to welcome you in Mannheim to our 34th Annual Meeting. We regret to inform you that the patron of our meeting, the Mayor of Mannheim Wilhelm Varnholt, died suddenly in Kenya on April 4, 1983 at the age of 57 years. He had been very much looking forward to joining us here. Later, it will be the turn of distinguished personalities to address us; among these are:

the President of the European Association of Neurosurgical Societies, Professor Brihaye from Brussels, the Chairman of our Society, Professor H. Dietz, Mr. Pföhler, Mayor of Mannheim, the Rector of the University of Heidelberg, Professor Laufs, the Rector of the University of Mannheim, Professor Roellecke, the representative of the Club of Rome, Professor von Kortzfleisch, the President of the District Medical Board for North Baden, Dr. Ital, and the President of the Mannheim Police, Mr. W. Menz.

We have received a telegram from the President of the World Federation, Professor W. Luyendijk, who sends his greetings and hopes that our meeting will be very pleasant and successful. He is at present busy in Washington and regrets that he is unable to be here with us.

I extend a particularly warm welcome to our visitors from abroad, who have come from Austria, Belgium, Brazil, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, Syria, and the United States of America.

This is the first time that neurosurgeons meet in Mannheim. It can be no fault of the town itself that we have not met here before; Mannheim is more attractive than ever. However, our particular field had scarcely any tradition here. Nevertheless, it was no less a person than Ernst von Bergmann (1836 - 1907) who directed a 180-bed military hospital in Mannheim, together with Theodor Billroth and Richard von Volkman, during the war of 1870/1871. Here he operated on numerous soldiers with gunshot wounds of the brain. At the time, Bergmann wrote to his sister: "I am in all respects better equipped than I was in Dorpat .... I shall soon be obtaining the most expensive surgical instruments ..... Indeed, if I could spend my whole life here at the mouth of the Neckar as head of a hospital such as the one I am now directing, I would be the happiest man on earth." In April 1871, he returned to Dorpat with his senior nursing sister, Pauline, who he had met here and married. From Dorpat he was appointed to Würzburg and then later to Berlin.

The Mannheim surgeons who followed him also practised neurosurgery. It was not until the 1950s that the clinics in this city had some of their
work load removed as a result of the gradual setting up of neurosurgical establishments in Heidelberg, Homburg, Mainz, and Gießen - to name only a few.

Neurosurgery was established in Mannheim on January 1st 1973, and in 1975 it finally achieved the status of an independent clinic. Indeed, the roots of Neurosurgery in Mannheim truly lie in Breslau, in the Wenzel-Hanke Hospital, which was directed by Otfried Foerster. It was there in 1934 that a research institute was established with the assistance of the Rockefeller Foundation. On 3 January 1978, K.H. Bauer wrote to me of Foerster as follows: "He lived just around the corner from me. For me he is one of the most distinguished men that I have ever met in the whole field of medicine. What a shame it was that my submission of his name for a Nobel Prize was not successful for lack of other supporters".

Foerster's head physician and successor was Arist Stender (1903 - 1975) and the residents were, amongst others, Ernst Klar (1909 - 1967) and Helmut Penzholz. Between 1938 and 1942, they were all working there together. These three neurosurgeons, together with Friedrich Weickmann, were my teachers - Weickmann and Stender in Berlin and Klar and Penzholz in Heidelberg. We have, over the years, maintained the most friendly relationship with the neurosurgeons in Breslau.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the first main topic is concerned with intracranial and intraspinal metastases from malignant tumors in other organs, the frequency of which is increasing. Here, we are principally considering carcinomas, melanomas, and hypernephromas. The treatment of these lesions is, for the most part, unsatisfactory; this is the case particularly with radiotherapy and chemotherapy. From the basic contribution written by outstanding specialists, guidelines with regard to the type and location of the primary tumor and the stage of development of the disease will be drawn and existing concepts on the subject will be reviewed.

The idea of the second main topic, "Neurosurgery in the aged" arose from a good deal of experience and numerous conversations with our ageing and old patients. People are getting older and older! Every fifth German is already over 60 years old. It should be our duty to see that these people preserve their health, creativity, and zest for life as they age. As recently as 1950, Stender stated that up to the age of 40 years an operation gives rise to no problems; for patients over 50 years some degree of caution is necessary, and over 60 years it is only exceptionally justifiable to carry out any neurosurgical intervention! The risks from operation have definitely fallen, thanks to interdisciplinary cooperation. However, what happens after the successful removal of a meningioma or hematoma? Without expert aftercare the result of any operation is uncertain. One may ask if, in general, there is any sense in operating on an old person when there is no guarantee that subsequent rehabilitation can be continued. In society, there appears to be increasing evidence of hostility toward the aged, which is quite shocking. There should be sympathetic understanding in the care of the aged in view of their dependence, helplessness, and loneliness. It would be a good thing if as much were done for the aged as is done for younger disabled persons.

These current topics predominate in the contributions in this volume. We are particularly pleased that the Association of Neurosurgical Nurses, which is holding its IXth Annual Meeting parallel with ours in the same congress center cooperates with us in the care of our
aged patients, and on April 29th, we shall be holding a joint meeting with the association. The association will also in the future be holding its meetings at the same time as ours.

The day of "free topics" is dedicated, as always, to very special diagnostic and therapeutic problems; this time particular attention will be given to evoked potentials, intracranial pressure, and cerebral circulation.

It was no easy task for our program committee to choose 92 papers from 176 that were submitted, and of these it will only be possible to publish approximately 60 in "Advances in Neurosurgery 12". For this reason, a great many splendid contributions must remain unheard in order that the already restricted time for discussion will not be further reduced. We beg for understanding and forbearance.

Once again, we must express our most sincere thanks to Springer-Verlag for their technical help in the preparation of this volume according to the established tradition and for prompt publication - as ever - at a reasonable price.

Wolfgang Piotrowski
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