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Cranial Nerves: Anatomy, Pathology, Imaging

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The anatomy of the human body has varied little over the past two millennia, but the way we see it has. For centuries, physicians have been examining lesions in their patients during autopsies. In the last 30 years, however, they have been able to see the brain and its pathological lesions using scanners and MR imaging, with an accuracy and level of detail their predecessors could not have imagined.

The May 2008 issue of the *Neuroimaging Clinics of North America*, edited by Jan Casselman, provided us with a detailed description of each cranial nerve in normal anatomy and the germane pathological processes. The plethora of authors, 42 in total, made the text uneven, although it was most often of high quality.

Devin K. Binder, D. Christian Sonne and Nancy J. Fischbein now offer us an alternative that is characterised by its instructive rigor. The 12 cranial nerves are successively examined, each accompanied by a few anatomical drawings in the style of old, coloured engravings. These illustrations are surprising but well suited to 3-D representation. Also included are brief summaries of each nerve's physiological function, a list of pathologies based on location along the nerve and the clinical signs presented by pa-

tients. Finally, the interpretation of pathological images is explained through clinical cases that are briefly and clearly summarised.

The written material is accurate and includes valuable pearls that either provide important clinical details or explain interpretation problems related to the imaging technique. While the respective role of the scanner and of MR imaging is noted at each juncture, most of the pictures used are MR images. The indication of vascularisation and its origin, provided at every level, is of interest. The changes over time in lesion appearance are also well detailed for ischemic and haemorrhagic pathologies. The chapters concerning nerves V, VII and VIII are much more developed than the others. But the clinical cases proposed for the spinal nerves, for example, are impressive, including rare pathologies explained in great detail (Jugular foramen schwannoma).

The quality of the images is remarkable, as much for their selection as for the quality of reproduction. Surprisingly, this imaging volume contains an appendix of the reflexes tested for each nerve during clinical examination; unfortunately, it does not begin with any technical explanation of examination methods or imaging interpretation basics. However, the numerous subtle aspects of image interpretation demonstrate the broad experience the authors set out to share, but which may discourage the non-expert. Overall, though, this is a valuable book both for teaching and for applying the data it contains to the complex cases confronting neurologists or neuroradiologists.

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