

Preface

Neurosurgical interventions to ameliorate the suffering of desperately ill patients, suffering from a psychiatric disorder, and who cannot be helped otherwise, have caught the attention of neurosurgeons, psychiatrists, and psychologists for several decades. The title of this book, “psychosurgery,” summarizes these types of interventions in one word. Everybody understands the word, and given the history, it has positive and negative connotations. In the book it is clearly explained what is really meant by psychosurgery. In fact, a surgical intervention on the brain is performed, and the wanted effect is an improvement of pathological behavior. Unfortunately, this beneficial effect is not always obtained and sometimes one encounters adverse events.

The members of the Committee of Neurosurgery for Psychiatric Disorders, which is a committee installed by the World Society for Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery (WSSFN), are convinced that at this moment in time, this kind of surgery can only be performed in a multidisciplinary approach, where psychiatrists work together with neurosurgeons and psychologists. It cannot at this moment be used to improve normal function (one calls this “enhancement”) and not as prevention, but only to reduce important suffering.

It was interesting to observe that during the Toronto meeting of the WSSFN in 2009, more papers were presented talking about neurosurgery for psychiatric disorders than for movement disorders, which is opposite to what happened many years before.

Marc Lévêque succeeds in providing a detailed overview of the history of neurosurgery for psychiatric disorders. Furthermore, he explains many aspects of the neuroanatomy of emotions. This chapter makes it understandable why several neurosurgical techniques have been developed. These techniques are described in extenso, together with their results. He gives an overview of the psychiatric disorders for which psychosurgery is performed. The author describes ethical principles that remain relevant for this kind of surgery, and he looks into the future as well.

In summary, I like the book as it provides a very nice overview of psychosurgery in general. It is easy to understand for any (para)medical practitioner, but even specialists in the field may learn new things. They may also enjoy looking at

the well-known and less-known figures which illustrate the book. The French edition of the book (which I read) seems to be a success, I presume the English version (which I did not see yet) will see an even wider readership.

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Psychosurgery

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