

Preface
Thoracic outlet syndrome



Marwan A. Wehbé, MD
Guest Editor

Thoracic outlet syndrome (TOS) is a specific disease, with specific symptoms, and it is treatable!

A recent survey revealed astounding information. One out of each five hand surgeons actually believes that TOS does not exist! One out of six believes that these patients never get better, no matter what the treatment. In a recent editorial, Peter C. Amadio, MD, stated, "There is not much agreement as to what exactly constitutes thoracic outlet syndrome" [1]. This attests to the difficulty in diagnosis and the variability in the results of treatment.

To put this in perspective, consider that carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) was first described in 1854 by Paget, and its surgical treatment was first reported in 1946 by Cannon and Love [2]. In contrast, TOS was described before CTS, in 1818 by Cooper, and its surgical treatment was first reported by Coote in 1861 and Keen in 1907 [3]. Why, then, hasn't TOS made as much progress as CTS?

First off, TOS is not as common as CTS. The methods used to diagnose and treat patients with TOS today are as numerous as the number of surgeons treating them. I have learned a great deal from each author, and have no doubt that each reader will find here a treasure of information about TOS. I have intentionally asked different authors to write seemingly identical articles; it is obvious that each approaches the problem in a unique way.

TOS surgery can be intense and stressful physically and mentally. The passion with which the authors took on this project at first surprised me. It became evident that we are dealing with a difficult problem that is avoided by most, but the few who dedicate their time and energy to the care of these difficult patients have found this a rewarding experience. Richard D. Meyer, MD, even stated, "Actually these are some of my most happy patients, even the workers' comp" [4].

References

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Marwan A. Wehbé, MD
Pennsylvania Hand Center
101 Bryn Mawr Avenue, Suite 300
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010, USA

E-mail address: marwan.wehbe@pahandcenter.com