Pelvic Organ Dysfunction in Neurological Disease

Clinical Management and Rehabilitation
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Contributors

Apostolos Apostolidis PhD FEBU
Lecturer in Urology-Neurourology,
2nd Department of Urology,
Papageorgiou General Hospital,
Aristotle University,
Thessaloniki, Greece

Charlotte Chaliha MA MD MRCOG
Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist,
Subspecialist Urogynaecologist,
Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology,
The Royal London & St Bartholomew’s Hospitals,
London, UK

Maureen Coggrave PhD MSc RN
Clinical Nurse Specialist,
The National Spinal Injuries Centre,
Stoke Mandeville Hospital,
Aylesbury, UK;
Lecturer,
The Burdett Institute of Gastrointestinal Nursing,
King’s College,
London, UK

Catherine M. Dalton MD MRCPI
Clinical Research Associate,
Department of Uro-Neurology,
National Hospital for Neurology & Neurosurgery,
London, UK

Ranan DasGupta MBBCh MA MD FRCS[Urol]
Consultant in Urology,
Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust,
London, UK

Soumendra Nath Datta MBBS(Hons) BSc(Hons) MRCS(Eng) MSc(Urol)
Specialist Registrar in Urology,
Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust,
London, UK

Marianne de Sèze MD PhD
Consultant,
Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Unit,
Urology Department of Saint Augustin Clinic,
Bordeaux, France

Sohier Elneil PhD FRCOG
Consultant in Uro-Gynaecology,
Department of Uro-Neurology,
National Hospital for Neurology & Neurosurgery,
London, UK

Anton Emmanuel BSc MD FRCP
Senior Lecturer in Neurogastroenterology,
Department of Gastroenterology,
University College Hospital,
London, UK

Clare J. Fowler FRCP
Professor of Uro-Neurology,
Institute of Neurology,
University College London, UK;
Consultant,
Department of Uro-Neurology,
National Hospital for Neurology & Neurosurgery,
London, UK

Xavier Gamé MD MSc
Consultant in Urology,
Department of Urology,
Kidney Transplantation and Andrology,
University Hospital Rangueil,
Toulouse, France;
Honorary Clinical Assistant,
Department of Uro-Neurology,
National Hospital for Neurology & Neurosurgery,
London, UK;
Honorary Research Assistant,
Institute of Neurology,
University College London, UK
## List of contributors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position and Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gwen Gonzales RGN</td>
<td>Clinical Nurse Specialist in Neurostimulation, National Hospital for Neurology &amp; Neurosurgery, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derek J. Griffiths PhD</td>
<td>Geriatric Continence Research Unit, University of Pittsburgh, USA; Honorary Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Neurology, University College London, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rizwan Hamid FRCSEd FRCS (Urol)</td>
<td>Consultant Neuro-Urologist, Department of Neuro-Urology, Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, London, UK; Department of Uro-Neurology, National Hospital for Neurology &amp; Neurosurgery, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collette Haslam BSc RGN</td>
<td>Clinical Nurse Specialist in Uro-Neurology, National Hospital for Neurology &amp; Neurosurgery, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeanette Haslam MPhil MCSP</td>
<td>Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist in Continence &amp; Women's Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takamichi Hattori MD PhD</td>
<td>Professor Emeritus, Department of Neurology, Chiba University Graduate School of Medicine, Chiba City, Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinay Kalsi MRCS</td>
<td>Specialist Registrar in Urology, Department of Urology, Frimley Park Hospital, Frimley, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajesh B. C. Kavia BSc(Hons) MBBS MRCSEd</td>
<td>Specialist Registrar in Urology, Wexham Park Hospital, Slough, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas M. Kessler MD FEBU</td>
<td>Consultant in Urology, Department of Urology, University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shahid Khan MS DNB MRCS</td>
<td>Registrar &amp; Honorary Research Assistant, Department of Uro-Neurology, National Hospital for Neurology &amp; Neurosurgery, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gustav Kiss MD</td>
<td>Head, Neuro-Urology Unit, Department of Neurology, University Hospital Innsbruck, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadi Manji MA MD FRCP</td>
<td>Consultant Neurologist, National Hospital for Neurology &amp; Neurosurgery, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalesh N. Panicker MD DNB DM MRCP(UK)</td>
<td>Consultant Neurologist, Department of Uro-Neurology, National Hospital for Neurology &amp; Neurosurgery, London, UK; Honorary Research Associate, Institute of Neurology, University College London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon Podnar MD DSc</td>
<td>Neurologist &amp; Clinical Neuropathologist, Institute of Clinical Neurophysiology, Division of Neurology, University Medical Centre, Ljubljana, Slovenia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giuseppe Preziosi MBBS MRCS</td>
<td>Research Fellow, Division of Surgery &amp; Interventional Sciences, University College Hospital, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryuji Sakakibara MD PhD</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Neurology Division,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of contributors

Department of Internal Medicine,  
Sakura Medical Center,  
Toho University,  
Toho, Japan  

Prateesh M. Trivedi  
BSc MD MRCS  
Research Fellow,  
Division of Surgery & Interventional Sciences,  
University College London, UK
Foreword

Excretory and sexual functions are mediated by the coordinated activity of multiple pelvic organs and by complex neural circuitry in the brain and spinal cord. Accordingly, injuries or diseases at various sites in the nervous system can produce prominent changes in micturition, defecation, and sexual activity. Thus basic knowledge of the neurobiology of the lower urinary tract, distal bowel, and sexual organs, which is provided in this book, is essential for urologists, gastroenterologists, neurologists, and urogynecologists who are caring for people with neurological disorders affecting the pelvic viscera.

The book is divided into three sections that contain: (1) comprehensive reviews of the neural control of the pelvic organs; (2) methods for evaluation and management of neurogenic disorders of individual organs; and (3) descriptions of the impact of specific conditions such as Parkinson’s disease, multiple sclerosis, and spinal cord injury on pelvic organ functions. The book brings together diverse information from many basic science and medical disciplines, including neurophysiology, neuropharmacology, neurology, urology, and gastroenterology, allowing the reader to compare the pathophysiological mechanisms underlying neurogenic dysfunctions of the different organs. These comparisons can be useful clinically in evaluating neurogenic disorders, because the pelvic organs exhibit similar afferent and efferent innervations carried by autonomic and somatic nerves arising at the lumbosacral level of the spinal cord. The organs also exhibit common unique properties not shared by other visceral organs including: (1) complete dependence on central neural control; (2) functions such as, micturition, defecation, emission-ejaculation, that are initiated in an all-or-none, switch-like manner; (3) functions requiring neurally mediated coordination between multiple smooth and striated muscles; and (4) voluntary control of micturition and defecation in contrast to the involuntarily control of other visceral functions.

The high quality of this book is attributable to the broad clinical and research expertise of the contributing authors, who are based in neurology, urology, gastroenterology, urogynecology, neurosurgery, and uro-neurology departments. This group of clinical scientists, which was organized by Professor Fowler at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, Queen’s Square, London, is recognized internationally for its studies of the neural mechanisms underlying pelvic organ dysfunctions. Professor Fowler’s laboratory has played a key role in identifying the pathophysiological mechanisms underlying overactive bladder symptoms and the mechanisms involved in idiopathic urinary retention in young women (Fowler’s Syndrome). Professor Fowler’s pioneering studies of intravesical vanilloid therapy established bladder afferent nerves as an important target for drugs, and her studies of the effects of botulinum toxin and sacral neuromodulation identified mechanisms by which these therapies influence bladder function.

The experience of Professor Fowler’s Uro-Neurology Department at Queen’s Square in integrating basic and clinical research has clearly served as a model for the preparation of this excellent book, which efficiently links basic neuroscience information with the diagnosis and management of neurogenic pelvic organ dysfunctions.

William de Groat
University of Pittsburgh
Preface

This book has been edited and written by, and for, clinicians with a special interest in the management of bladder, bowel and sexual problems in neurological disease. Based soundly on knowledge of basic science, the first section outlines the separate neurological control of bladder, bowel and sexual function. The next section describes the investigation and generic management of each type of organ dysfunction, dealing predominantly with medical treatments, although a chapter on surgical interventions is included as well. Not attempted in any other single volume, a unique feature of the approach taken in this book is the description of the impact of neurological dysfunction on each pelvic organ.

The Department of Uro-Neurology was established at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, Queen Square, London 20 years ago and all the authors of this book have had a close association there, either contributing to its research or developing the clinical service. Over this period much has been learnt from basic science as well as clinical studies about the neurological control of the pelvic organs and possible treatment of their disorders. Pelvic Organ Dysfunction in Neurological Disease brings together that knowledge in an easy-to-read text. Each chapter makes sense on its own but if the reader wants to know more, for example about the treatment of symptoms in a specific condition, they will find good internal referencing to the relevant chapter. The book is directed towards any healthcare professional managing patients in whom pelvic organ functions have been compromised by neurological disease. These patients present with complex pelvic organ symptoms, and it is our intention that the clinician who sees such a patient can now source helpful information from a single book, not separate textbooks on urology, gynecology, andrology and gastroenterology.