

## Preface

There have been numerous developments in the diagnosis and treatment of intervertebral disk diseases since the last edition. In many industrialized countries, back problems attract increasing attention; it is now generally understood that they affect a very high proportion of the population and give rise to enormous costs. Low back pain also forms a central topic of the Bone and Joint Decade, which is currently in progress.

This new English edition is the product of a thorough revision. It incorporates the most recent additions to our understanding of spine biomechanics, which were contributed by Professor H. J. Wilke (engineering). The sections on psychology and the treatment of pain were updated by Professor M. Hasenbring (medical psychology).

The clinical diagnosis of disk diseases is now centered on magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). This all-encompassing radiological study has largely displaced myelography, discography, and finally even CT as the diagnostic method of choice for disk diseases. This book contains many striking images of MRI scans, taken

from an atlas that I compiled a few years ago together with Professor O. Köster (a radiologist). In my own institution, the last few years have witnessed new developments in both the conservative and the operative treatment of disk diseases. Spinal injection techniques have been improved in collaboration with Dr. T. Theodoridis, while the microsurgical treatment of lumbar disk herniation has been improved in collaboration with Professor J. Herdmann (neurosurgery) and Dr. Robert Kraemer (orthopedic surgeon).

I would like to thank Dr. Ethan Taub for his thorough editing and his additions to our original work. His contribution is of immense value for a better international understanding of intervertebral disk diseases.

My thanks also go to all those who have enabled me to write a monograph on such a wide topic. I also thank Georg Thieme Verlag for the large and attractive format of the book.

*Juergen Kraemer*