

Preface

Since the development of microsurgical techniques and discovery of consistently repeated vascular patterns of tissues, the face of reconstructive surgery, or rather the face of surgery as a whole, has totally changed. Any established training program in plastic and reconstructive surgery devotes, in parallel to clinical work, a considerable amount of time to revisiting specific nuances in the anatomy laboratory, as well as to mastering microsurgical techniques, both being integrated fundamentals, upon which the practice of plastic surgery is built. Anatomical dissections for learning specific surgical techniques, especially as pertinent to the harvesting of flaps, are best accomplished by referring to a written and illustrated resource kept readily open on a book rack there and then, as one proceeds with the dissection.

A textbook is a tool with an intentional purpose and utility. Even when covering the same topic, two books may have a completely different scope and focus. There are a variety of excellent written resources on reconstructive surgery using flaps, which compete and complement each other as regards the fundus of scientific material they command. Depending upon the requirements of the reader, one resource may be of great value, while another may be of little interest.

Here I would like to impart some of my experience as a trainee in plastic and reconstructive surgery: on-call-free Saturdays were an excellent time in the anatomy laboratory for learning the harvesting of flaps. Before I went on these missions, considerable homework was required; I used to refer to various volumes on reconstructive surgery, cull the most relevant information as pertinent to the anatomical nuances and surgical technique of the flaps I had planned to harvest the next day, and make appropriate sketches and scribble essential notes that I would take with me to the laboratory. This discipline accompanied me further into the operating room while doing clinical work, and continues to do so when attending to challenging cases.

The discovery and improvisation of surgical flaps have developed via a painstaking route of

enormous effort in innovative thinking, and meticulous search for the lurking truths, adding steadily to the volumes of existing literature. The result of such consistent scientific endeavors is seen in today's practice of surgery. However, when one is confronted with the question of "how to do it," the historical nuances of scientific discovery disappear into the background and serve as a strong basis, upon which the variations of techniques are held.

This manual, *An Illustrated Handbook of Flap Raising Techniques*, is in no way unique. As already mentioned, there are already volumes devoted to the topic. This presentation is a compilation of my schematic diagrams and sketches, notes on the technical nuances, and observations on the pitfalls, which I found most useful during the phase of my learning to harvest free flaps. Nor does this manual claim to preach wisdom, rather it hopes to accompany the user toward it, by means of aiding him or her in persistent technical accomplishments. Bearing these qualities in mind, the text and literature references are kept to a minimum, with more offerings of diagrammatic sequences to assist in understanding by viewing the illustrations. There are numerous flaps that were not treated in this selection; flaps of the hand, head and neck, and perforator flaps for example. The manual concentrates, rather, on the most versatile flaps that are quickly learned and easy to harvest.

This handbook claims to be a technical companion for flap surgery, but its aim would not be substantiated without mention of microvascular and microneural sutures. Two chapters at the end of the manual are devoted to techniques in microsurgery, which might be considered useful as an introduction into these areas. I only hope that this collection of artwork and corresponding description is brief enough to be quickly covered, and at the same time elaborate enough to provide an impetus for furthering the search, to have created a book that will benefit the reader.

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