

Letter to the Editor

The use of a temporal bone log book in otological training

Dear Sirs,

Temporal bone dissection is a vital part of otological training, as an appreciation of the normal anatomical relationships within the temporal bone is the prelude to safe and successful temporal bone surgery. However, a previously plentiful supply of cadaveric temporal bones has become the exception¹ as the political fallout from 'scandals' such as Alder Hey has dramatically reduced the number of post mortems being performed. An alternative training tool, the plastic temporal bone has considerable merit as an adjunct to the cadaveric bone (www.temporal-bone.com). Nevertheless, the cost of these bones tends to limit their supply. There are certainly many pressures, ethical, political and legal, that are increasing the need to use simulators to teach and assess trainees.² With this current situation it is therefore desirable that these training opportunities are maximized and that each bone, artificial or cadaveric, is utilized to its full potential.

At present, it is mandatory that trainees record all operations performed and these are assessed both on an annual basis as well as at the final assessment leading to granting of the Certificate of Completion of Specialist Training. However, this does not apply to learning from temporal bones. We would therefore suggest that a temporal bone log book is a highly desirable addition to the assessment armamentarium. Suggested procedures can be amended depending upon the year of the trainee. Consultant feedback on each procedure carried out is incorporated and it is hoped that these comments will

increase the amount learned from each bone. An additional consequence is that trainers in new hospitals will have some record of the trainee's temporal bone knowledge and it will be easier to identify those trainees who demonstrate the dedication and desire to super-specialize in Otology.

There is an impression that patients increasingly require assurance of surgeons' competence.³ This will be an additional tool to generate such assurance.

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