

# ENDONASAL ENDOSCOPIC SURGERY OF SKULL BASE LESIONS

## Thesis

Submitted for Complete Fulfillment of  
The M.D. Degree in  
**Neurosurgery**

By

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## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
▪ <b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
▪ <b>Review of Literature</b> .....	<b>8</b>
○ Anatomy .....	9
○ Pathology of Skull Base Tumors .....	30
○ Imaging of Skull Base Tumors .....	55
○ Diagnostic Evaluation .....	85
○ Approach to Sella .....	92
○ Extended Endoscopic Endonasal Approaches to the Skull Base	103
○ Endoneurosurgical Hemostasis .....	142
○ Reconstructive Techniques .....	151
○ Advantage of the Endoscopically Assisted Bimanual Operating Technique .....	163
▪ <b>Patients and Methods</b> .....	<b>166</b>
▪ <b>Results</b> .....	<b>171</b>
▪ <b>Case Presentation</b> .....	<b>192</b>
▪ <b>Discussion</b> .....	<b>200</b>
▪ <b>Summary</b> .....	<b>207</b>
▪ <b>References</b> .....	<b>210</b>
▪ <b>Arabic Summary</b> .....	<b>217</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
1	Intracranial targets that can be reached with the endonasal endoscopic cranial base approaches	4
2	Innovations such as the microscope (a) and later the endoscope (b) further contributed to the evolution of the transsphenoidal approach allowing improved illumination, magnification, and visualization	5
3	(A) Anatomy of the nasal septum (B) Skeletal framework of the nasal septum	11
4	Osseous relationships of the sphenoid bone, the sphenoid bone is outlined in each view	14
5	Varieties of sphenoid sinus pneumatization	17
6	Nasal pathway to the sphenoid sinus.	17
7	Endoscopic view of the sphenoid ostium (right nostril)	18
8	(A) Panoramic view inside the sphenoid sinus after enlargement of the natural ostium (B) Closer view of the optocarotid recess	20
9	Endoscopic views obtained in a cadaver, showing basic concepts for extended approaches	21
10	Endoscopic views obtained in a cadaver, showing the extended approach to the planum sphenoidale	22
11	Endoscopic view obtained in a cadaver, showing the extended approach to the olfactory groove.	23
12	Endoscopic views obtained in a cadaver, showing the extended approach to the clivus (nasal and sphenoidal steps of the procedure)	25
13	Endoscopic views obtained in a cadaver, showing the extended approach to the clivus (intradural step)	26
14	Endoscopic views obtained in a cadaver, showing the extended approach to the craniovertebral junction and anterior portion of the foramen magnum (intradural step)	27
15	Panoramic endoscopic view obtained at the end of the dissection.	28
16	(A) Axial T1-weighted gadolinium enhanced MRI scan showing cavernous hemangioma (C) Transsphenoidal approach to the cavernous sinus	29
17	Squamous carcinoma, keratin, forming tumor nest formation with invasive growth pattern	32
18	Nasopharyngeal carcinoma, undifferentiated type (WHO-III) showing undifferentiated neoplastic cells with cleared nuclei in a prominent lymphoid background	33
19	WHO grade I meningioma with multiple "whorls" (arrows, H & E x200)	34
20	Esthesioneuroblastoma comprised primitive small tumor cells	35
21	Chondrosarcoma comprised of cartilage with increased cellularity of chondrocytes with a haphazard growth pattern	36
22	Chordoma comprised of vacuolated physaliphorous cells in a myxoid background	37
23	Melanin pigmented cells in malignant melanoma of the sinonasal mucosa	38

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
24	Diffused B-cell lymphoma composed of sheets of pleomorphic cells and necrosis	39
25	Nasopharyngeal angiofibroma with scattered stellate cells in a fibrous stroma with prominent vessels	40
26	Adenoid cystic carcinoma, cribriform type	41
27	Histology of typical pituitary adenoma	27
28	Adamantinomatous craniopharyngioma exhibiting calcification and inflammatory reaction	44
29	Atypical meningioma, WHO grade II. This photomicrograph illustrates cellular sheeting, a feature indicative of increased tumor aggressiveness (H&E x200).	46
30	Carotid body paraganglioma showing nests of clear cells surrounded by thin capillaries. This appearance represents the classical "Zellballen" pattern	54
31	Ethmoid carcinoma. Coronal images showing bony destruction on CT scan and intracranial invasion on T1-MRI with contrast	57
32	Sinonasal Melanoma	58
33	PET-CT of head and neck. The fused PET-CT images show ethmoid carcinoma	59
34	Olfactory groove meningioma in a 53-year-old woman complaining of visual disturbance	61
35	Squamous cell carcinoma of the frontal and ethmoid sinuses in a 66-year-old woman presenting with bloody nasal and oral secretions and subsequent left eye visual changes (A and B)	61
36	T1-weighted brain MRI with contrast demonstrating strongly enhancing irregular bony lesion along the left cavernous sinus that extends into the left temporal fossa. Biopsy confirmed chondrosarcoma	63
37	T1-weighted brain MRI with contrast showing suprasellar homogeneously enhancing lesion consistent with meningioma	63
38	Chordoma (A) T1-weighted post gadolinium axial MR image shows this chordoma to be moderately enhancing (B) T1-weighted coronal image shows destruction of the clivus by a midline tumor	64
39	Axial CT scans showing large pituitary tumours	65
40	Enhanced MRI showing large pituitary tumour extending up to the 3 <sup>rd</sup> ventricle	66
41	Plain lateral skull X-ray showing thinning of the dorsum sellae and destruction of the pituitary fossa in a patient with a large pituitary tumour	66
42	Pituitary microadenoma on MR imaging	66
43	Juvenile angiofibroma in a 20-year-old man presenting with bilateral nasal congestion but no epistaxis	69
44	Nasopharyngeal carcinoma with massive central skull base destruction in a 55-year-old man presenting with headache and subsequent development of diplopia	70
45	Infiltrating neoplasm of the right temporal bone. The diagnosis ultimately proved to be meningioma	72

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
46	Left-sided CP angle meningioma with involvement of the jugular foramen in a 43-year-old woman presenting with tinnitus and progressive left-sided hearing loss	72
47	Neurofibromatosis type II in a patient with long-standing disease and multiple manifestations.	73
48	Massive skull base glomus tumor in a 32-year-old woman with long-standing occipital region headache and progressive lower cranial neuropathies (A and B)	73
49	Lateral video fluoroscopic view defining the superior and inferior margins of the sella turcica.	74
50	Neuronavigation images showing the position of the tip of the endoscope (crosshair) during the dissection in the axial (A), sagittal (B), and coronal (C) planes	77
51	BrainLab VectorVision workstation	78
52	Neuronavigation tools	78
53	Intraoperative correlation of endoscopically identified anatomic landmarks at the tip of the stylet (arrowhead), lateral x-ray anatomy, and neuronavigational data set in transsphenoidal surgery	79
54	Anatomic neuronavigation combined with intraoperative MRI in a 14-year-old girl with a large suprasellar craniopharyngioma	84
55	Transsphenoid corridors	93
56	Endoscopic views obtained in a cadaver showing the standard (right nostril) approach to the sellar region	95
57	Endoscopic view obtained in a cadaver, showing the standard approach to the sellar region (sphenoid step of the procedure)	96
58	Endoscopic view obtained in a cadaver, showing the standard approach to the sellar region (sphenoid step of the procedure).	98
59	Endoscopic views demonstrating the critical segments of intrasellar tumor removal	100
60	Contrast-enhanced T1-weighted MR images	105
61	(A) Preoperative postcontrast MR imaging with representative coronal (upper) and sagittal (lower) views demonstrating a suprasellar meningioma with critical relationships to the parasellar neurovascular structures (B) Postoperative postcontrast sagittal MR image demonstrating complete tumor removal and anatomical preservation of critical neurovascular structures	107
62	(A) Endoscopic view of the planum module once the bone removal has been completed.	108
63	(A) Endoscopic view following opening of the tuberculum and planum (P) dura mater. The tumor (T) can be seen once the suprasellar cistern is opened (B) Endoscopic view demonstrating extracapsular dissection of the tumor to identify the right ICA.	110
64	(A) Endoscopic view showing a small subchiasmatic perforating vessel draped over the dome of the tumor (B) Endoscopic view showing that after adequate debulking the tumor capsule	111
65	Endoscopic view obtained after tumor resection. The ACoA (Acom) and the recurrent artery of Huebner (RAH) can be seen above the chiasm (C)	112

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
66	(A) Preoperative MR images demonstrating a large olfactory groove meningioma.	114
67	(A) Endoscopic view using a 70° scope showing the key relationships along the left olfactory sulcus. The cribriform plate (CP) is seen medially and the AEA is also seen. This artery can be seen as it emerges from the orbit after the lamina papyracea has been removed (B) The periorbita (PO) can be seen laterally and a hemoclip (HC) is applied just at the level at which the AEA emerges from the periorbita	115
68	Endoscopic view using a 70° scope showing the relationship of the tumor capsule to the second segment of the ACA (A2) as it courses through the interhemispheric fissure (F)	116
69	(A) Preoperative MR images obtained following contrast administration demonstrating recurrent clival chordoma. Note the intradural extension with severe brainstem compression (B) packing used Preoperative cerebral arteriography revealing severe displacement of the BA (C) Postoperative postcontrast MR images demonstrating removal of the tumor with fat packing used for reconstruction	117
70	Endoscopic view obtained following a complete clivecto-my and intradural tumor removal. The right and left vertebral arteries (VA) can be seen forming the VBJ.	118
71	(A) axial MRI scan revealing a large clival lesion that involves the upper, middle, and lower parts of the clivus with significant extension to the left side, significantly compressing the pons. (B) axial MRI scan after surgery (expanded endoscopic endonasal), confirming surgical gross total resection (C) intraoperative view of the basilar trunk after the endoscopic endonasal removal of the central part of the tumor	120
72	(A) 0-degree-lens endoscopic view of the bony anatomy of the posterior wall of the sphenoidal sinus: sella (s), clival indentation (c), planum sphenoidale (ps), optic canal (oc), carotico-optic recess or optic strut (os), carotid protuberance (cp), maxillary protuberance (mp), and foramen lacerum (fl) (A and B).	124
73	(A) and (B) 0-degree-lens endoscopic views of the dura mater of the anterior wall of the sella.	125
74	(A) view under a 0-degree-lens endoscope; B-D, views under a 30-degree-lens endoscope directed laterally to the left	128
75	(A-C): 30-degree-lens endoscopic views directed laterally to the left. Once the periosteum is removed at the cavernous sinus apex, cranial nerves III, IV, V-1, VI, and the superior orbital fissure (sof) are exposed laterally to the parasellar ICA (A)	129
76	Endoscopic views obtained in a cadaver, showing the extended approach to the craniovertebral junction and anterior portion of the foramen magnum	131
77	Endoscopic views obtained in a cadaver, showing extended approach to the craniovertebral junction and anterior portion of the foramen magnum	132
78	Endoscopic views obtained in a cadaver, showing the extended approach to the craniovertebral junction and anterior portion of the foramen magnum	133



<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
79	Endoscopic views obtained in a cadaver, showing the extended approach to the craniovertebral junction and anterior portion of the foramen magnum (intradural step)	134
80	Illustration depicting a view of the sella containing a macroadenoma as seen from a right endonasal approach. The sellar bone has been removed and, as is often the case, the contralateral bone removal on the left is somewhat more extensive than on the right, leaving the medial edge of the left cavernous ICA exposed	139
81	Closure in cases with intraoperative CSF leak	140
82	Intraoperative views demonstrating the different types of endonasal bipolar cautery devices	144
83	Photographs showing preparation of the Avitene "sandwich"	145
84	Schematic views illustrating the endoneurosurgical hemostasis technique	147
85	(A) Endoscopic endonasal view demonstrating the isolation of the left anterior ethmoidal artery (AE). The vessel can be seen exiting the periorbita (PO) laterally and running into the cribriform plate (CP) medially. The lamina papyracea has been removed, exposing the periorbita, and wide bilateral ethmoidectomies have been undertaken (B) Endoscopic view demonstrating the position of the hemoclip (HC) directly at the point of exit of the anterior ethmoidal artery from the periorbita	150
86	Composite of intraoperative photographs acquired through the endoscope, showing the key steps of the initial reconstructive technique used after an expanded endonasal approach	154
87	Endonasal view obtained during reexploration for a CSF leak that arose after an expanded endonasal approach, demonstrating that the majority of the graft has granulated well	155
88	Endonasal view obtained during reexploration for CSF leakage that occurred as a result of an expanded endonasal approach following an earlier transplanum approach	156
89	(A) Schematic view through the sphenoid sinus (SS) demonstrating the defect (D) in the cranial base. The bone margins (BM) of the defect can be seen in the depths of the sphenoid sinus (B) Schematic drawing demonstrating Step 1 of our current reconstruction technique. Collagen matrix (Duragen; Integra Life Sciences) is being placed subdurally through the dural defect. The margins are redundant to allow for an adequate overlap intradurally beyond the bone margins of the defect	157
90	Schematic view demonstrating the positioning of the extradural onlay graft. Acellular dermis (off-label indication) is used. Note that all of the folds in the graft must be flattened to ensure complete contact, minimizing the risk of persistent channel formation. Defect	158
91	Schematic view demonstrating the placement of the fat graft on top of the epidural onlay graft (OG). This obliterates the sphenoid sinus and provides pressure on the onlay graft beneath	159
92	Schematic view showing the placement of fibrin glue on top of the fat graft to create a coagulum to the level of the anterior face of the sphenoid sinus	159

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
93	Schematic view demonstrating the positioning of the balloon stent outside (anterior) to the sphenoid face. The balloon is used to apply pressure on the grafts within the sphenoid sinus	160
94	Schematic view demonstrating the current multilayered reconstruction technique. Note the redundancy of the subdural inlay graft (shown in red) allowing for contact with the residual dura mater	161
95	(A) Photograph showing the right naris with the endoscope and suction at the 12- and 6-o'clock positions, respectively (B): Photograph depicting the binasal approach with the endoscopist passing the scope in the right naris	164
96	Adenoma patient sex	176
97	Microadenoma and macroadenoma	177
98	Non-functioning & functioning adenoma	177
99	Functioning pituitary adenoma	177
100	Pituitary adenomas with suprasellar extension	178
101	Pituitary adenomas with cavernous sinus invasion	178
102	Non-secreting adenoma and visual deficit	179
103	Non-secreting adenoma & GTR	180
104	Correlation between non secreting adenoma GTR & visual recovery	181
105	GH-secreting adenoma & visual deficit	183
106	GH-secreting adenoma&GTR	183
107	Correlation between GH-secreting adenoma GTR & visual recovery	183
108	ACTH secreting adenoma GTR and endocrinological cure	184
109	Prolactinoma patients & GTR	186
110	Prolactinoma patients & endocrinological cure	186
111	Prolactinoma patients and visual deficit	187
112	Correlation between prolactinoma patients GTR and visual deficit	188
113	Types of complications	189
114	Preoperative sagittal & coronal MRI with contrast revealed sellar & suprasellar pituitary adenoma (prolactinoma)	192
115	Postoperative sagittal and coronal MRI with contrast revealed total removal of the tumor through endoscopic endonasal approach	192
116	Preoperative coronal and sagittal MRI revealed pituitary macroadenoma	193
117	Postoperative CT brain axial cuts showed total tumor removal	194
118	Preoperative sagittal and coronal MRI with contrast revealed sellar and suprasellar pituitary adenoma	195
119	Postoperative sagittal and coronal MRI revealed total removal of the tumor	196
120	Pre-operative sagittal & coronal MRI with contrast revealed non-secreting sellar & suprasellar pituitary adenoma	197
121	Post-operative sagittal & coronal MRI with contrast revealed total removal of the tumor through both endoscopic transnasal & transcranial approaches	197
122	Pre-operative MRI brain axial & coronal cuts showing olfactory groove meningioma encroaching more to the right orbit	198
123	Post-operative CT brain axial & coronal cuts showing subtotal excision of the tumor through endonasal endoscopic approach	199

## **LIST OF TABLES**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
1	Parts of the middle turbinate	11
2	Tumors of the Sinonasal Tract	31
3	Lesions of the Sella Turcica	42
4	Differential Diagnosis of Clival Tumors	48
5	According to Kelly's paradigm, intraoperative CSF leaks were categorized based on size	101
6	Master table of cases	172
7	Pituitary adenoma patients	176
8	Non-secreting adenoma patients & visual deficit	179
9	Non-secreting adenoma patients gross total removal (GTR) & visual recovery	180
10	GH-secreting adenoma patients & visual defect	181
11	GH-secreting adenoma patients GTR & visual recovery	182
12	ACTH-secreting adenoma patients GTR & endocrinological cure	184
13	Prolactinoma patients total removal & endocrinological cure	185
14	Prolactinoma patients total removal, visual deficit & visual recovery	187
15	Complications of adenoma patients	188
16	Chordoma patients	189
17	Meningioma patients	190

## **Abstract**

The results of this study confirm the value, efficacy, and safety of endoscopic pituitary surgery. The technique can achieve favorable removal and remission rates with very low morbidity. Endoscopic cranial base surgery is a minimal invasive alternative to traditional transsphenoidal, transcranial, or transfacial approaches to the cranial base. The main indication is for centrally located lesions or as an adjunct to craniotomy for more extensive tumors. The technique's minimally invasive nature makes it very attractive for selected patients, as it has the potential to minimize the morbidity associated with other extensive approaches. Long-term control data and prospective analysis of surgical series are required to strengthen these conclusions and to extend the approach to totally remove skull base tumors. The endoscopic endonasal transsphenoidal approach for skull base tumors is a minimally invasive surgery preserving the nasal structures thus facilitating faster postoperative recovery. It offers a panoramic view of the sphenoid sinus with visualization of the corners of the sellar and suprasellar structures with increased illumination and magnifications. Such visualization provides a potential for more complete tumor removal with preservation of pituitary function and very low rate of complication. Finally we still need time to increase our skills and experience to master this approach and to improve our results regarding total excision of skull base tumors other than pituitary adenoma. We feel that the advantages of the endoscopic approach will make this technique the favored approach for future treatment of skull base tumors.

### **Keywords:**

Endonasal  
Endoscopic surgery  
Skull base lesions

# **INTRODUCTION**

## INTRODUCTION

The cranial base constitutes an anatomic boundary between the fields of neurosurgery and otolaryngology. Surgery in this region has always been a challenge for both disciplines. As a result of productive collaborations between practitioners in the fields of otolaryngology and neurosurgery, a variety of transcranial and transfacial cranial base approaches have been developed to reach pathology in almost any location. However, these open approaches have a complication rate of 18 to 60%; they often involve significant amounts of brain retraction, neurovascular manipulation, and cosmetic compromise; and they frequently rely on complex plastic surgery closures. In response, another collaboration between neurosurgeons and otolaryngologists has recently resulted in the development of the new field of endoscopic endonasal cranial base surgery. These minimally invasive approaches access the midline cranial base using the natural apertures in the face, namely the nostrils. Visualization is provided with rigid straight and angled endoscopes that can illuminate areas of the cranial base that were previously unreachable with standard microscope-based transsphenoidal or transoral approaches. Because the lens sits at the tip of the endoscope and travels to the pathology, magnification is unnecessary and the panoramic 360-degree view facilitates visualization, even around corners. Rather than calling these approaches minimally invasive, it may be more accurate to say minimal access, because the ultimate goal is to perform a resection as aggressively as with an open approach (**Paolo Cappapanca *et al.*, 2008**).

In recent years, several pioneering groups have published cadaveric studies, small case series, case reports, and conceptual articles illustrating the potential for a purely endonasal endoscopic approach to remove an assortment of pathological lesions in a range locations throughout the midline cranial base (**Schwartz *et al.*, 2008**).

Transsphenoidal approaches to the ventral midline skull base were first proposed more than a century ago. Initially these approaches were restricted to the pituitary fossa, but with progressive evolution in biotechnology, coupled with increased anatomical understanding, the transsphenoidal approaches were extended to regions beyond the sella turcica to include other entities in addition to pituitary tumors. The introduction of the operating microscope by Hardy in the 1960s, coupled with Dott's contribution of fluoroscopy, provided the first critical navigation/visualization integration that formed the foundation of the work that followed (**Amin Kassam *et al.*, 2005**).

The addition of the endoscope, coupled with the current sophisticated neuronavigation systems, builds on this foundation. The expanded endonasal approach evolved when these principles were then further augmented with the concept of team surgery; that is, a neurosurgeon and otolaryngologist working simultaneously throughout all phases of the surgery (approach, resection, and reconstruction). Using the principles of the expanded endonasal approach, we are now able to access the entire ventral skull base, from the crista galli up to and through the odontoid, and we are able to address a diverse array of intra- and extradural entities (**Fig. 1**) (**Amin Kassam *et al.*, 2005**).

The first principle in both understanding and successfully achieving the desired results using the endoscopic endonasal approaches is that the surgery is best performed as collaborative surgery between otolaryngology and neurosurgery, preferably by an otolaryngologist with experience performing functional endoscopic sinus surgery and a neurosurgeon with experience performing transsphenoidal pituitary and transcranial cranial base surgery. Both surgeons should be involved in all aspects of the case, including operative planning as well as the approach, resection, and closure. Our categorization of the endoscopic cranial base approaches derives precisely from this collaboration. Although the nasal corridors are most familiar to the otolaryngologist, the targets are most familiar to the neurosurgeon. The approaches derive from the union of these two perspectives. In addition, the surgical technique itself and the understanding of how straight and angled endoscopes can be applied to improve visualization arise from the meeting of these two unique perspectives, which evolves over time during the course of the collaboration. The second principle for successful endoscopic cranial base surgery-and critical in deriving adequate approaches and exposure-is the role of stereotactic navigation, which we use in all cases. One now has the option of using either rigid fixation or a cranial pin to fix the reference frame as well as electromagnetic or infrared tracking systems. Although fluoroscopy has been the primary method of navigation during transsphenoidal surgery, the ease and accuracy of modern frameless stereotactic systems has made implementation of more extensive endoscopic approaches safe and feasible. Although the corridor(s), approach(s), and target(s) are chosen before each procedure, as the operation progresses, we often use intraoperative stereotactic navigation to modify, improve, update, and streamline our approach (**Schwartz *et al.*, 2008**).