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Preface

The idea for this book emanates from my long history in neuroscience nursing. Forty-plus years ago, when I first discovered my love for patients with neurologic disorders, neuroscience nursing textbooks were rare. We had to learn as we went, meeting each new challenge with questions and searching far and wide for more information.

One of my most frustrating early experiences occurred when I was taking care of a patient with a brain tumor. The diagnosis itself did little to tell me what I wanted to know about my patient's condition and the proposed course of treatment. When I approached an oncologist with a request for information on types of brain tumors, treatment, and prognosis, I was given the name of a textbook—a very large oncology textbook. I managed to obtain a copy of that textbook, but I did not open it for months. What I really wanted was more concise information, presented succinctly, perhaps in a table, to make it easier to learn what I needed to know. I knew then that handy, easy-to-use reference materials, such as in a handbook like this one, would be most helpful to the bedside nurse.

The purpose of this book is not to teach the reader all there is to know about neuroscience nursing. Wonderful textbooks exist today to assist anyone wishing to learn more about this challenging field. Instead, the purpose of this book is to help the nurse, or the therapist, or clergy, or anyone else who is taking care of a patient with a neurosurgical disorder to take care of the patient more safely and confidently. The references at the end of each chapter will point the reader to additional resources for more thorough and comprehensive learning.

This handbook is divided into four sections. Section 1 covers anatomy and assessment of the central nervous system. The

nurse is shown how to complete a neurologic assessment accurately and thoroughly, how to understand the clinical correlation of physical findings, and how to appropriately document those findings.

Section 2 is devoted to specific conditions associated with neurosurgical patients. These conditions include seizures, hydrocephalus, electrolyte disorders, and, most importantly, the principles of intracranial pressure. As these conditions may be seen in most, if not all, neurosurgical patients, much important information can be gleaned from these chapters.

Section 3 is concerned with neurologic disorders that frequently warrant neurosurgical intervention: tumors, cerebrovascular disorders, trauma, infection, and disorders of the spine and spinal cord. Each chapter discusses and outlines clinical manifestations of each disorder, as well as methods of diagnosis, treatment, and nursing management. Supplemental tables give added information on diagnostic tests, pharmacology, and multiple nursing interventions.

Finally, Section 4 deals with diagnostic tests and treatment of neurosurgical disorders. This section addresses neuroradiology, radiotherapy, surgical procedures such as craniotomy and spinal surgery, and rehabilitation.

The appendixes at the end of the book provide additional helpful information. They include tables of nursing management of multiple neurologic disorders, preoperative checklists, and discharge instructions.

This book is intended for anyone who takes care of adult patients with neurologic disorders that may require neurosurgical intervention. Nurses of all levels of experience will find much of use within its pages. It includes an abundance of helpful information for student nurses as well as for experienced

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neuroscience nurses. Other health care providers such as therapists, case managers, social workers, and clergy will also find it helpful. The handbook format makes it convenient to use by the provider taking care of the neurosurgical patient.

My sincere hope is that this book will give nurses and other health care providers who

are taking care of neurosurgical patients more confidence and an increased ability to provide excellent care. May it also inspire them to continue learning throughout their careers.

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