



The upper esophageal sphincter: no man's land

The upper esophageal sphincter (UES) may be nicknamed no man's land. First, digestive surgeons call it by his functional name (UES)—marking territory by including the name *esophagus*—while ENT surgeons usually call it by his anatomic description (cricopharyngeus)—marking territory by including the name pharyngeal, although the physiologic UES is formed also by other muscles as well as cartilages and bones, as Dr. Belafsky team will elegantly show on their review of the anatomy and physiology of this area (1). Second, digestive surgeons frequently access the UES using the incision they are used to perform to do an esophagectomy, i.e., an oblique incision at the medial border of the sternocleidomastoid muscle while head and neck surgeons preferably opt for a transverse or collar incision. Finally, while ENT surgeons have the tools to anatomically inspect the UES and digestive specialists have the tools to inspect it physiologically, they are rarely interchangeably used. Moreover, the UES is often neglected during esophageal manometry, as Dr. Laurino Neto will show (2). This series reviewed the UES anatomy, physiology, pathophysiology and treatment.

The series starts with the review on the anatomy and physiology by the University of California at Davis (1), followed by the functional assessment of the UES by the team of the Federal University of São Paulo (2). In this last review, Dr Laurino shows that high resolution manometry overcomes most of the technical limitations of conventional manometry that precluded an accurate test of the UES. How the UES is affected by two common esophageal diseases is comprehensively review by Dr. Velanovich and his team from the University of South Florida, for the case of gastroesophageal reflux disease (3) and Dr. Menezes and the group from Londrina for the case of achalasia (4). Finally, the group from Buenos Aires, led by Dr Schlottmann (5) critically evaluated the 2 most common treatments for UES dysfunction: cricopharyngeal myotomy and toxin botulinum injection.

The experts, and they are real “connoisseurs” of this subject, that were invited to compose this series certainly brought the UES back to knowledge's land.

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