



Symposium "Rhinological problems in children"

Introduction

Paul B. van Cauwenberge, Ghent, Belgium

A child is not a small adult and its diseases should in many cases not be investigated and treated as similar diseases occurring in adults. The gross anatomy of the nasal cavity, the spontaneous behaviour of the nasal mucosa and its reactivity to different stimuli show differences between children and adults.

The treatment of congenital malformations is usually performed in early childhood to avoid immediate and minimize late sequelae.

The paranasal sinuses – if already present – have a totally different structure and intrinsic function in children, and adenoids are still present and active, not only in a positive but also, and especially, in a negative way.

Allergic phenomena, with exception of hay fever, give in general other clinical symptoms in children than in adults; very often infections are intermingled with the allergic manifestations. There are indications that in our civilized society, there is a shift in incidence from infection to allergy in children.

Recently, very interesting information was obtained about the growth pattern and activity of different growth centers in the nasal septum and surrounding tissues. Nasal traumas, even minor ones, may have disastrous effects on the growth and final development of the nasal structures; an adequate and early treatment may prevent this kind of misdevelopment. Because of the presence of delicate growth zones, rhinosurgeons should be well informed about the topography of these centers and should keep the surgical trauma as minimal as possible.

Finally, malignant rhinological tumours may also occur in children. Their start is usually very insidious and only accompanied by common symptoms, such as nasal obstruction and middle ear effusion. The tumours are always very aggressive (non-Hodgkin lymphoma, rhabdomyosarcoma). Treatment of choice seems to be specific polychemotherapy.

These facets of pediatric rhinology will be treated in this panel by different ex-

perts, who all have showed before to have a special affection for pediatric otorhinolaryngology.

Paul B. van Cauwenberge, M.D.
Akademisch Ziekenhuis
De Pintelaan 185
B-9000 Ghent
Belgium