“If a method produces better results, one must master any difficulty it presents and
learn to do it well” (talking on Herbert screw).
Nicholas Barton. *J Hand Surg* 1997;22B:153

I still remember when we were stared at in meetings as if we were aliens (and grouped
under the “arthroscopists”). This feeling of being an “outsider” was not strange to me
at all, as when several of us started to carry out what was called “third-generation
microsurgery,” we provoked the same feelings. This convinced me that we were on
the right path, and that arthroscopy was the right tool and persuade me to keep on
using in it in more and more applications.

One of the most fascinating fields where we were able to apply our maverick ideas
was to distal radius fractures with articular involvement. The arthroscope allowed us
to have a magnified view of the reduction, to detect associated chondral or ligamen-
tous injuries, and to treat many of them. *It was exciting to realize how many things we
could see and fix through such tiny holes!*

Surprisingly, however, and despite growing literature supporting the role of
arthroscopy, many surgeons are still reluctant to systematically use the arthroscope
when treating distal radius fractures, when we all agree that fluoroscopy is quite inac-
curate. Two of the arguments given are that no one has yet proved that the scope is
better than traditional treatments in prospective-randomized studies, and the second
one, more difficult to voice, is that the operation is technically difficult. Hence, why
complicate one’s life with the scope if there are no advantages to be gained?

Regarding the first argument, I must admit that the scientific purists are right: there are
not yet Level 1 studies that have shown that arthroscopy is so much better than traditional
methods in the treatment of distal radius fractures. One has to accept that innovation goes
well ahead of comparative studies, and it will take some time before such studies are
available. The problem is compounded by the fact that there are so many variations in a
distal radius fracture that we will need a long time before each subtype is properly
assessed. Can our patients wait so long to benefit from a method that allows us to see the
reduction with minimum morbidity and maximum accuracy? After all, there have been
many studies showing that articular congruity is the most important prognostic factor
after an articular fracture, and the scope is no doubt the tool to see inside a joint.

Another question altogether is if it is easy to carry out an arthroscopic-assisted
reduction of articular distal radius fractures. The answer is no. As a matter of fact,
things have become more and more sophisticated since the arthroscopic management
of distal radius fractures has advanced enormously in the last 15 years. Renowned
specialists around the world have been brought together in this book to share with us
their innovative way of dealing with some of the problems. Furthermore, beginners will find the basics succinctly explained by masters in a step-by-step manner. The reader may find it perplexing that each of us might manage the same injury in a somewhat different manner. This variability is explained by the fact that very little was written at the time we began our journey seeking the same goal: anatomical reduction with minimal trauma. Don’t worry! Choose the way that suits you best and go ahead….after all, all roads lead to Rome. My advice is, “build your own foundations and steadily move forward; don’t leap into too complicated cases before you are confident with the simple ones.” As an example, as a starting point, simply washing out the hematoma would be a good exercise in order just to be acquainted with the set-up.

It is pertinent to stress at this point that the arthroscope is just a tool to improve reduction, and expertise in the management of distal radius fractures with the classic techniques is more important than the arthroscopic part itself. The maxim is, “classics first and then innovation” – ignoring this will inevitably lead to unwanted problems and bad results.

If you are yet not convinced that the scope is the tool, as a simple exercise I recommend you to insert an arthroscope inside a joint with a fracture that fluoroscopically seems to be reduced. Who knows? You may just change your mind, and find this book useful. After all “seeing is believing,” as Marc Garcia-Elias writes in the Foreword.

Last, but no least, I would like to thank all authors for having accepted to become part of this project, and to Christophe and Riccardo, and the EWAS group for supporting me on it.

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