



**The Acute Facial Palsies: Investigations on the  
Localization and Pathogenesis of Meato-  
Labyrinthine Facial Palsies (Schriftenreihe  
Neurologie Neurology Series)**

*Erlo Esslen*

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I have been privileged to work with Dr. Esslen for more than ten years and to have witnessed how surgical progress combined with accurate clinical and electrophysiological investigations have revolutionized the diagnostic and therapeutic approach to the paralyzed face. The long journey of the VIIth nerve through the temporal bone has been considered for years responsible for the particular liability of this nerve to acute palsies. The disappointing results obtained with surgical decompression confined of necessity to the mastoid and tympanic segments of the fallopian canal led us in the sixties to apply modern otoneurosurgical techniques in order to achieve total exposure of the intratemporal course of the facial nerve. At that time Esslen started to record with surface electrodes the compound action potential evoked by maximal percutaneous stimulation in representative areas of the facial muscles. With this method, called electroneurography, exact determination of the percentage of degenerated nerve fibers could be achieved in the early stages of the palsy. Precise electroneurographic criteria for the selection of patients requiring surgery in order possibly to improve the outcome of their disfiguring paralysis were worked out. At surgery direct stimulation of the totally exposed intratemporal portion of the facial nerve was used for the first time in combination with electroneurography in order to determine objectively the degree of the lesion. In contrast to what has been believed for years the pathology related with acute facial palsy has been found to be situated in the majority of the cases at the entrance and not toward the exit of the fallopian canal.

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