

Preface



Kevin C. Chung, MD
Guest Editor

The most enticing and challenging component of a hand surgery practice is the treatment of children who have congenital hand differences. Children are incredibly adaptable, and they can compensate remarkably well, despite missing a major portion of a limb. The difficulty in treating children's hands is not only what to do and how to do it, but when to do it and when not to do it. For example, children who have syndactyly of border digits need to have earlier operations, perhaps before the age of 6 months, to avoid permanent contractures of the joints that can inevitably result in irrevocable deformities. Similarly, newborns who have constriction band syndrome may require early releases of the constriction band to preserve the length of the already short digits. In contrast, some of the more dramatic hand problems, such as cleft hands, may not require treatment, and inconsiderate operations may result in an aesthetic triumph, but a functional disaster.

The creative and caring qualities of pediatric hand surgery are fully displayed by the contributing authors in this issue. Their meticulous presentation of sage experiences in their articles share the loving relationships with the children whose future livelihood depends on the successful treatments. I am most privileged to have assembled some of the world's leading experts in treating congenital hand problems. My assignment as the editor for this issue was made simple by my dear friends, who contributed magnificent and scholarly manuscripts that required virtually no editing. The authors for this issue were selected for their experience and insights to these complex problems. Treating pediatric hand problems is not an exact science, because it is impossible to perform high-level evidence studies because of ethical concerns

and the relatively low incidence of these conditions. Therefore, the expert opinions by trusted senior colleagues are all we have to go by. It is with this duty that the authors in this issue present time-tested procedures that can ensure predictably acceptable outcomes based on a logical sequence of treatments to enhance the children's potential. Certainly, this issue does not cover all the complexities of this subject, but it does synthesize a crucial element of practical approaches in treating common congenital hand problems.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have children as a large component of my practice. Many of them travel quite a distance to seek my care, and I consider them my children, as I see them transitioning from newborns to college students. We all hope that the advances in medical technology and tissue engineering will allow us to provide even more options to the children whose parents have entrusted the care of their children to us. I am indebted to Allison Pushman, my assistant (who will enter medical school next year) for her expert coordination of this project. I am proud to present this issue to you and on behalf of my contributing authors, thank you for your devotion to the children.

Kevin C. Chung, MD
 Section of Plastic Surgery
 Department of Surgery
 University of Michigan Medical School
 2130 Taubman Center
 1500 E. Medical Center Drive
 Ann Arbor, MI 48109, USA

E-mail address:
kechung@umich.edu (K.C. Chung)