More on Occupational Hazards for Pathologists

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To the Editor

George¹ provides invaluable advice for all professional microscopists by discussing the hazards and some remedies of spending a lifetime fixed at a microscope. It is ironic that his first citation about the problem was from America in 1835, while the next, 145 years later, came from Sweden. Cited American papers were even more recent.

I offer 2 suggestions beyond George’s, based on personal experience overcoming problems with my back and left shoulder related to a professional lifetime of microscopy. By trial and error, my eventual solution for my back was to work standing with the oculars of the microscope at the level of my eyes. If standing is not acceptable, I recommend perching (not sitting) on a wheeled stool or kneeling on a Scandinavian rocking stool so as to place a major portion of the stress on the large muscles of the thighs, shifting subtly through the motion of the wheels or rockers.

For the left shoulder, after bouts of tendinitis and severely limited motion with recurrent episodes of medical and rehabilitation therapy, an occupational therapist watched me at work for 30 minutes, prescribed a fixed support (appliance) for my left (focusing) forearm, and prevented any recurrence of the acute problem in the shoulder.

There is reason to be hopeful. Maybe the problems will disappear as we are replaced by artificial intelligence, tireless scanners, and other enhanced alternative diagnostic methods, and we can all then concentrate on our tennis elbow.

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Reference

The Author’s Reply

Thank you for your comments and for sharing the workstation modifications that have been helpful to you. This underscores the importance of individual variables, personalized attention, creativity, and perseverance in managing work-related cumulative traumatic disorders. At the same time, however, it is important to remember that prolonged static postures—even well-adapted ones—place one at increased risk for developing a cumulative traumatic disorder.

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Reference