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Laser tonsil treatment under local anesthesia: a patient-friendly effective alternative?

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LASER TONSIL TREATMENT UNDER LOCAL ANESTHESIA:

A patient-friendly effective alternative?

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A patient-friendly effective alternative?

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PREFACE

My decision to pursue medicine was inspired early on by my father, a multifaceted physician who is a neurologist, psychiatrist, and acupuncturist. With an open mind, I began my studies, eager to explore the many possibilities within the field. During my clinical rotations, I developed an interest in ENT surgery, a specialty where I took my first steps as a physician in The Hague.

In seeking further growth, I was offered several research projects. However, these were often fully developed topics that left little room for my own input. Having already gained experience with smaller studies, I knew I wanted to take on a larger project, something that would demand time and dedication, but also genuinely motivate me.

That opportunity came at Haga Hospital in The Hague, where the ENT team, uniquely in the Netherlands and beyond, performed outpatient laser tonsil treatments without general anesthesia. As a senior house officer (ANIOS), I regularly performed the procedure myself and became intrigued by both its potential and the controversy surrounding it. Although a small cohort study was underway, I saw that its design and scale were insufficient to convincingly demonstrate the procedure's value. Yet the popularity of the treatment was undeniable, with patients traveling from across the Netherlands (and beyond) to The Hague for this less invasive option.

The theory behind this selective approach, treating only the symptomatic tissue, resonated with me. Prof. Henk Blom's enthusiasm was contagious, and together we decided to thoroughly investigate the value of laser tonsillotomy. Although previous attempts had been made, these projects had stalled before completion. The result of our renewed effort now lies before you, presented in the following chapters.

Today, I am working as an ophthalmologist. Combining my passion for ophthalmology with ENT research has been both challenging and rewarding. Reflecting on this project, I see it as an incredibly enriching experience in many ways. Beyond scientific growth, I gained insight into the broader research landscape: from grants being unexpectedly withdrawn and other resistance from those skeptical of innovative approaches. At the same time, I experienced the positives: doors that opened in the name of science, the unwavering support of loved ones, and the tangible impact research can have. Our work has helped this procedure evolve from a controversial method to a recognized and insured treatment within Dutch healthcare.

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, who have always stood by me unconditionally, enabling me to pursue my goals, for which I am deeply grateful.

Thank you for your interest in our research. I hope you enjoy reading it!

Justin Wong Chung

"Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything." *George Bernard Shaw*

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