



Reader Feedback

Which Side Does SSS Actually Steal From?

I believe there may be an error in the first sentence of the article “Case in Point—Percutaneous Endovascular Treatment of Subclavian Steal Syndrome,” which is found on page 8 of the January 2004 issue of *Federal Practitioner*. This sentence states that, in subclavian steal syndrome (SSS), a negative pressure situation is created “that ‘steals’ blood from the contralateral vertebral artery....” I believe this should read: “...‘steals’ blood from the *ipsilateral* vertebral artery....”

—Michael J. Frederiksen, MD
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The author responds:
Dr. Frederiksen is correct in pointing out that, in most cases of SSS, blood is “stolen” from the flow of the ipsilateral rather than the contralateral vertebral artery. In patients with severe symptoms, however, the “steal” involves both the right and left vertebral arteries, as they join to form the basilar artery at the base of the brain. Therefore, instead of ipsilateral or contralateral, it might be best to use the general term vertebrobasilar flow when describing the “steal.” From an anatomic, pathologic, and pathogenetic point of view, it would be more accurate. ●

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