



# MDT Interface Webinar Series

Session 2: Optimising Shoulder Function after major Head and Neck Surgery.

📅 Tuesday 11th November 2025 | 🕒 8:00 PM (BST) | 💻 Online | 🎓 Free to attend

## Key Topics Covered

- Cause of shoulder dysfunction following neck dissection (surgical considerations)
- Risk factors and Prevalence
- Patient impact
- Assessment
- Management and outcomes

Short talks followed by Panel Discussion/Q&A

## Panel



**Ruth Price**  
Head & Neck Oncology  
Specialist Physiotherapist,  
Liverpool H&N Centre



**Timothy Lui**  
Senior Head and Neck Fellow,  
Aintree Hospital



**Charlotte Lloyd**  
Senior Physiotherapist in  
specialist surgery,  
Birmingham Hospitals

👉 [Register here](#) 📧 [Queries: bahnow@gmail.com](mailto:bahnow@gmail.com)

LIVERPOOL  
head  
&  
neck  
CENTRE



# Spinal Accessory Nerve Injury Surgeon's Perspective

Timothy Liu

Senior Head and Neck Fellow / Specialty Doctor

Aintree University Hospital

Liverpool Head & Neck Centre

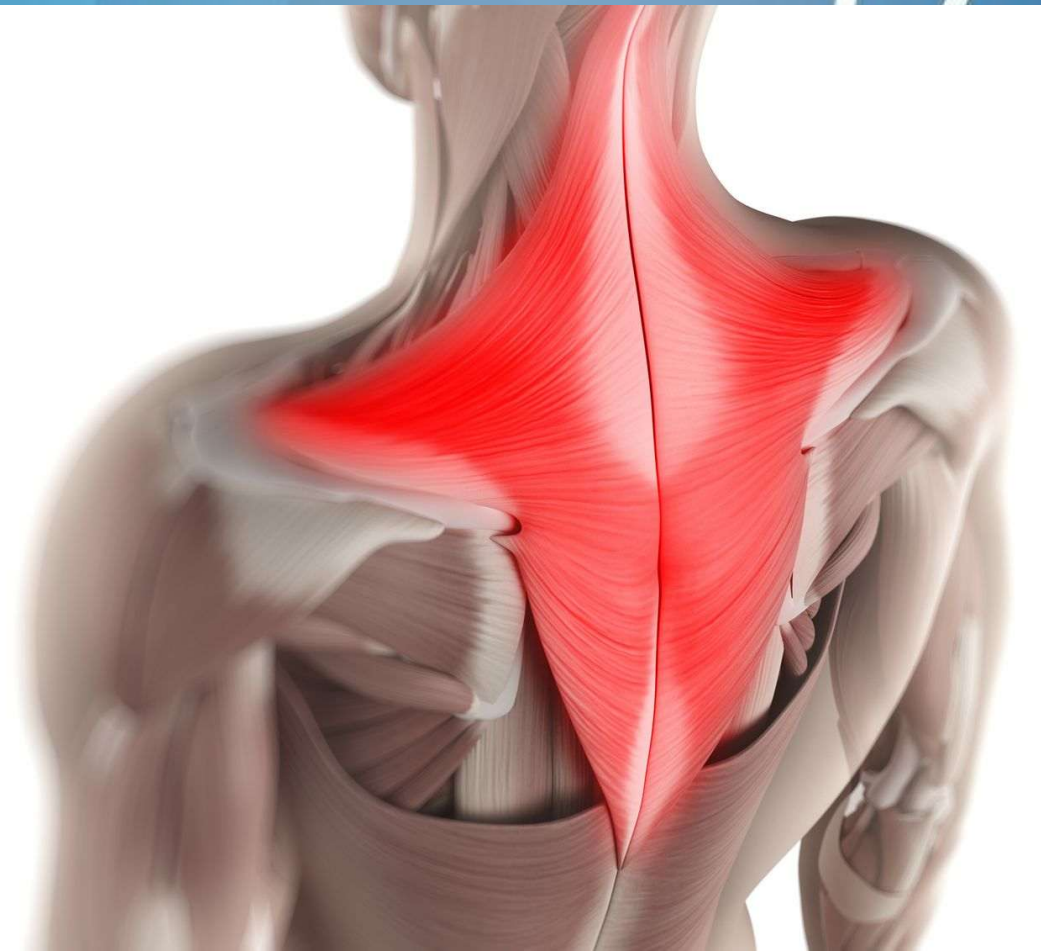
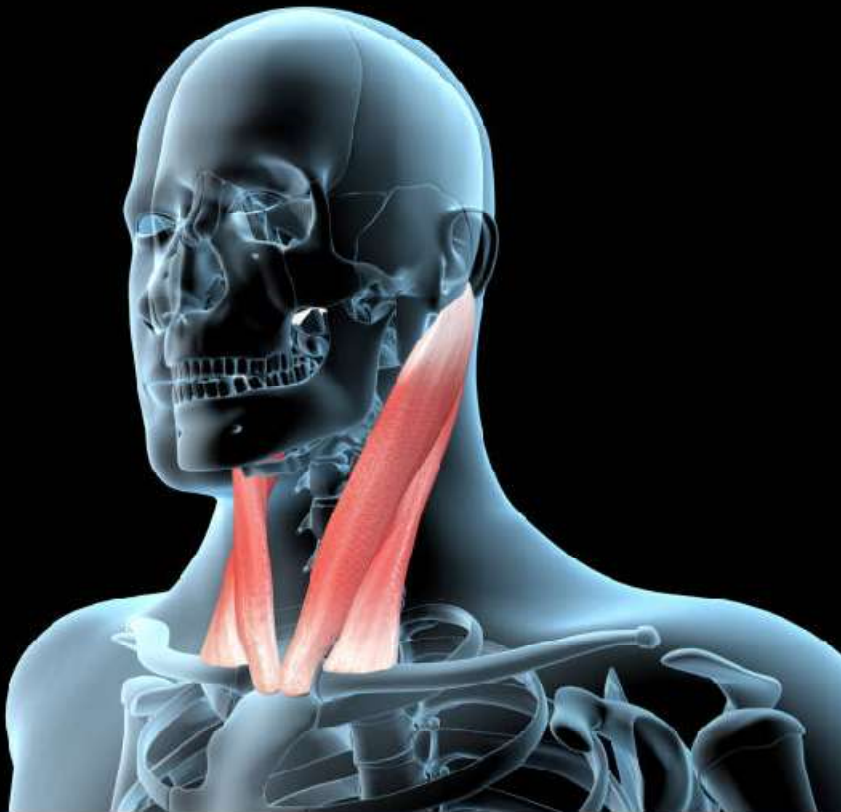


# Introduction

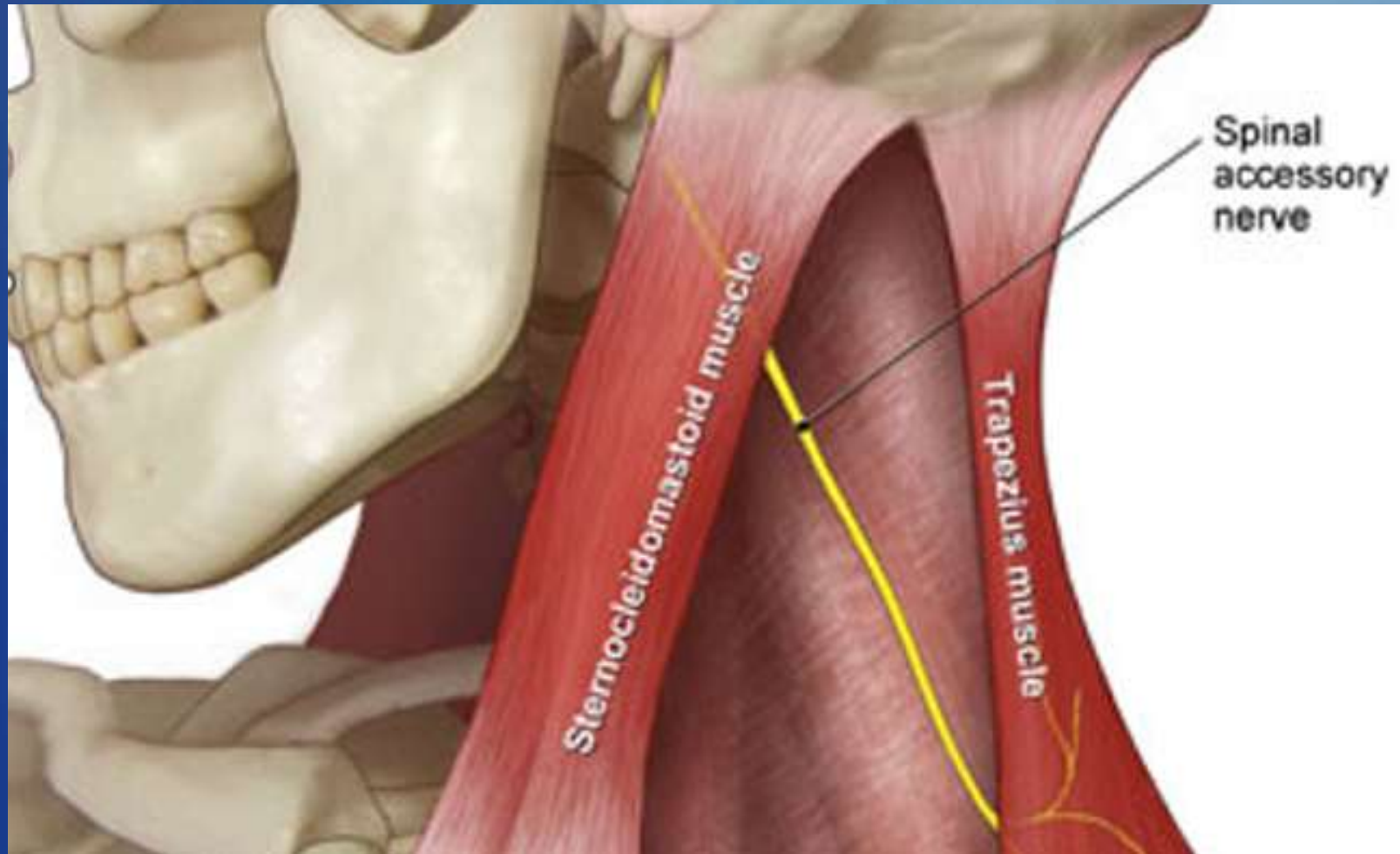
- Functional morbidity of neck dissection
  - Sternocleidomastoid
    - Contralateral head rotation
    - Head flexion
    - Neck posture
  - Trapezius
    - Shoulder elevation
    - Scapular rotation during arm abduction past 90 degrees
    - Shoulder girdle posture



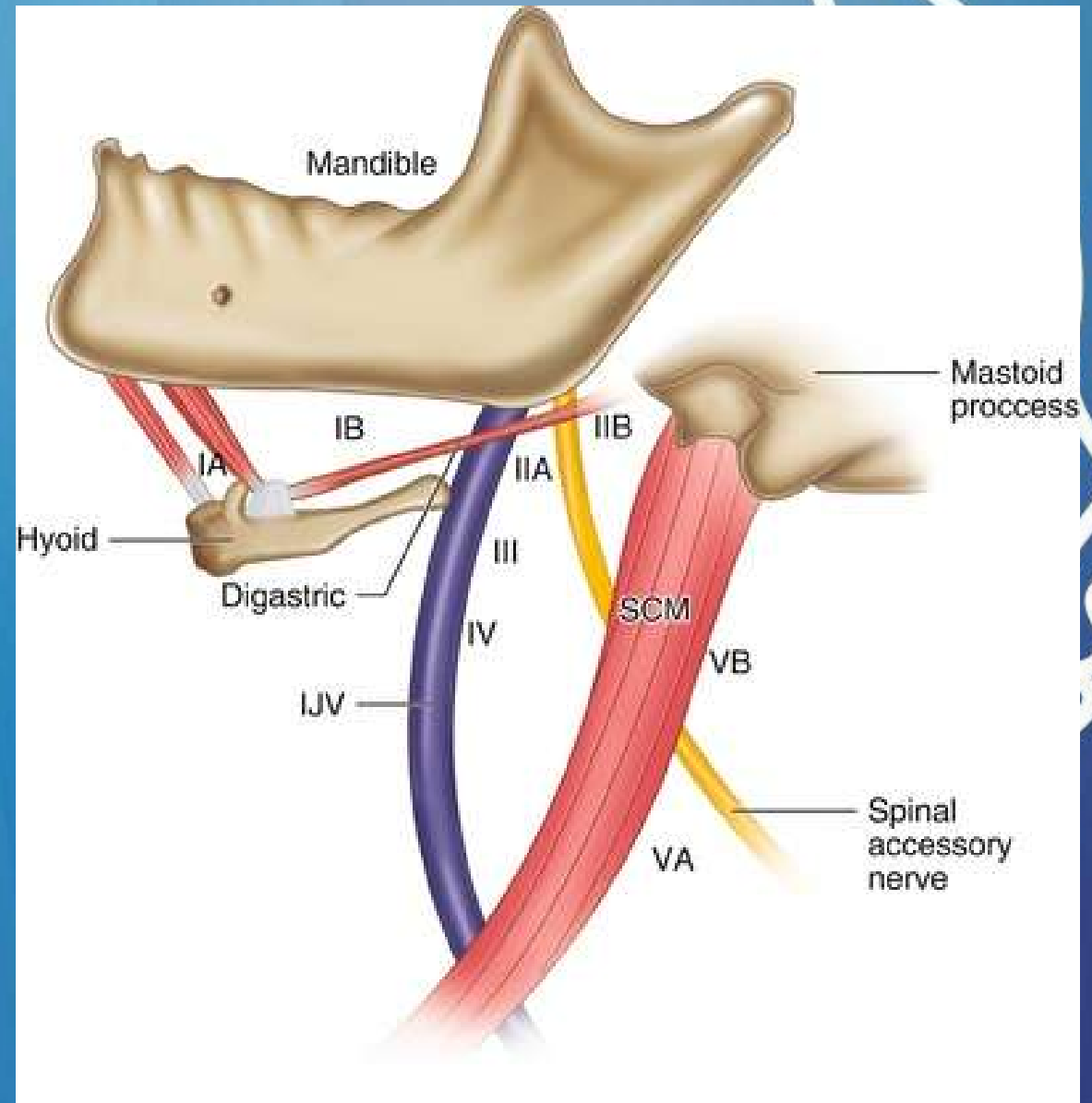
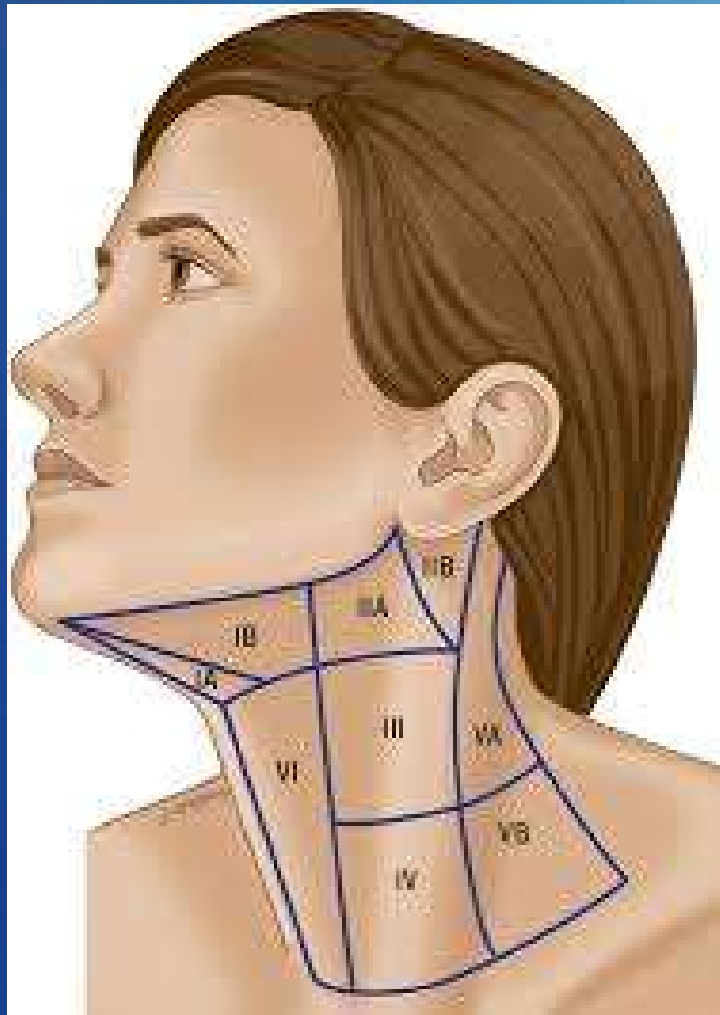
# Sternocleidomastoid & Trapezius



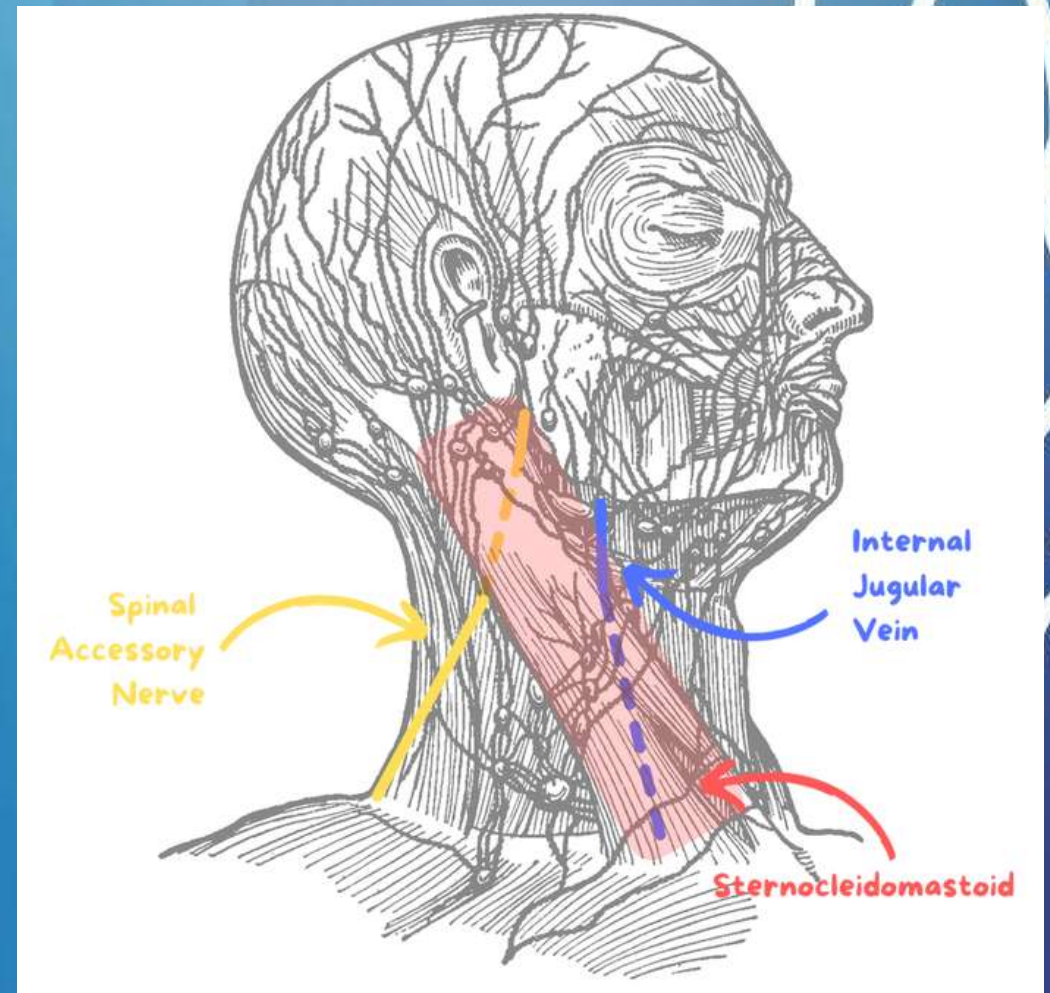
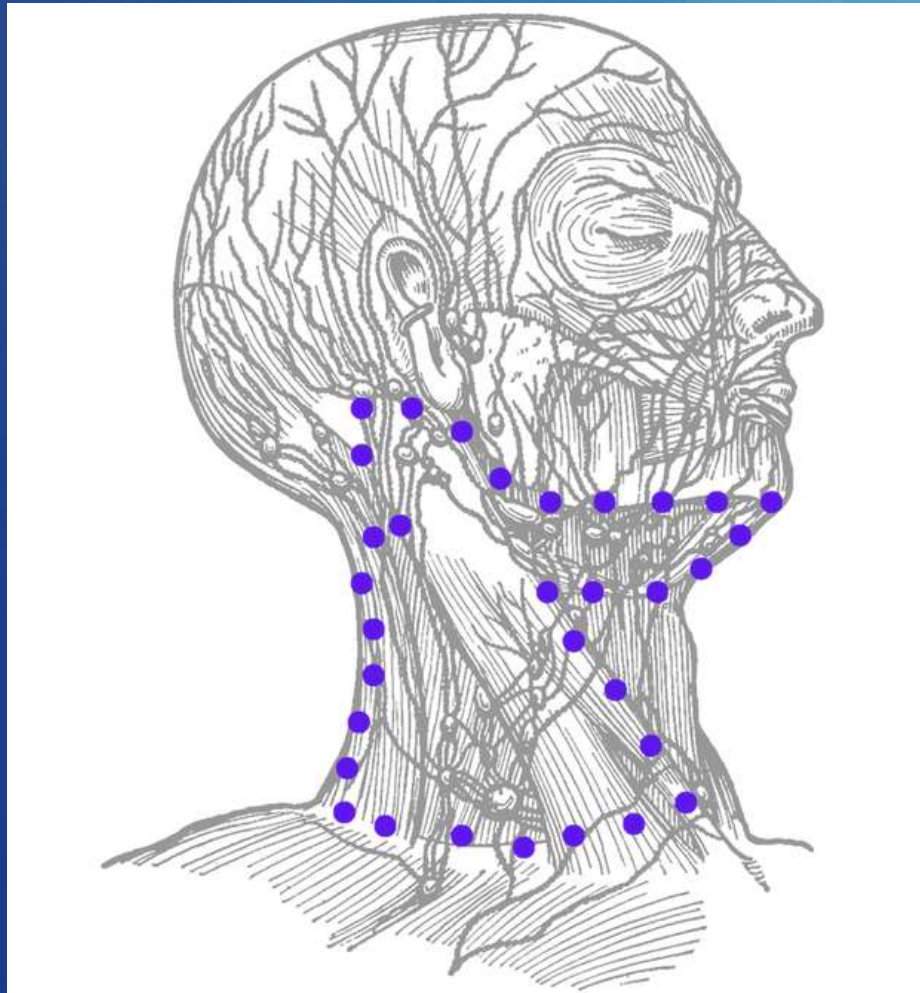
# Spinal Accessory Nerve



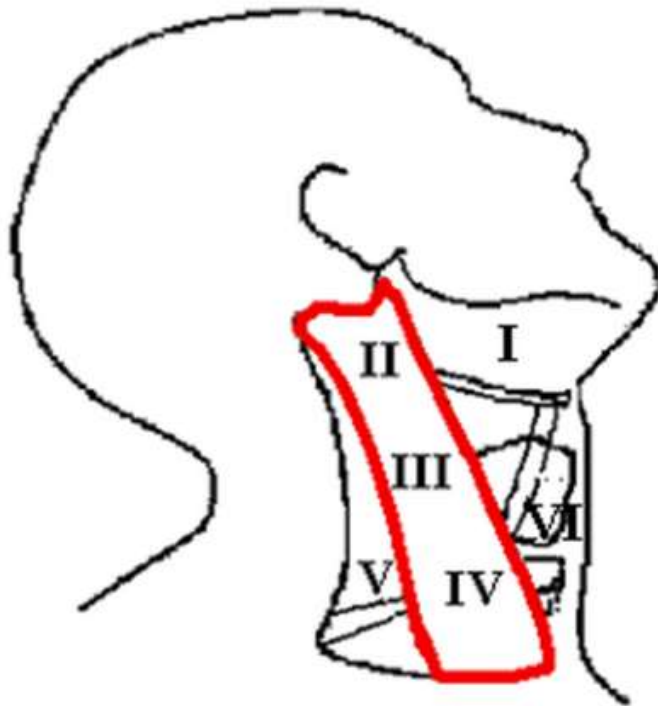
# Neck Dissection



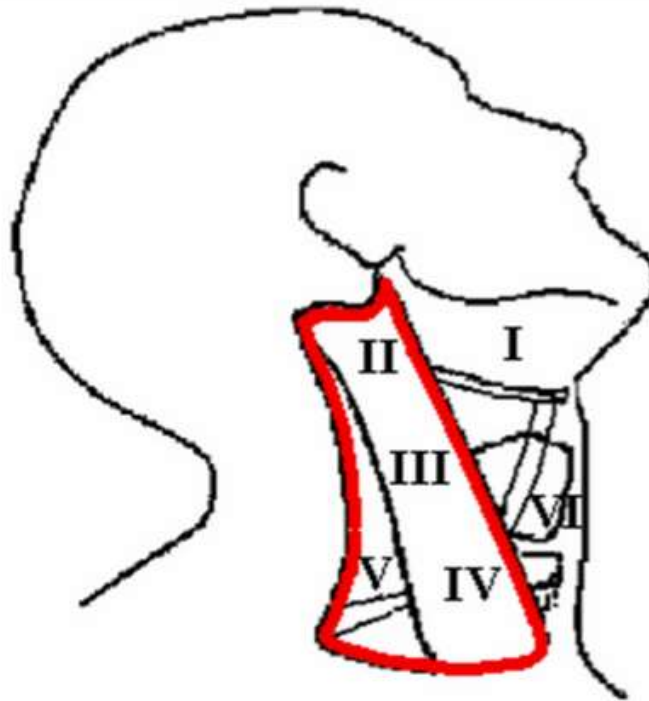
# Neck Dissection Types



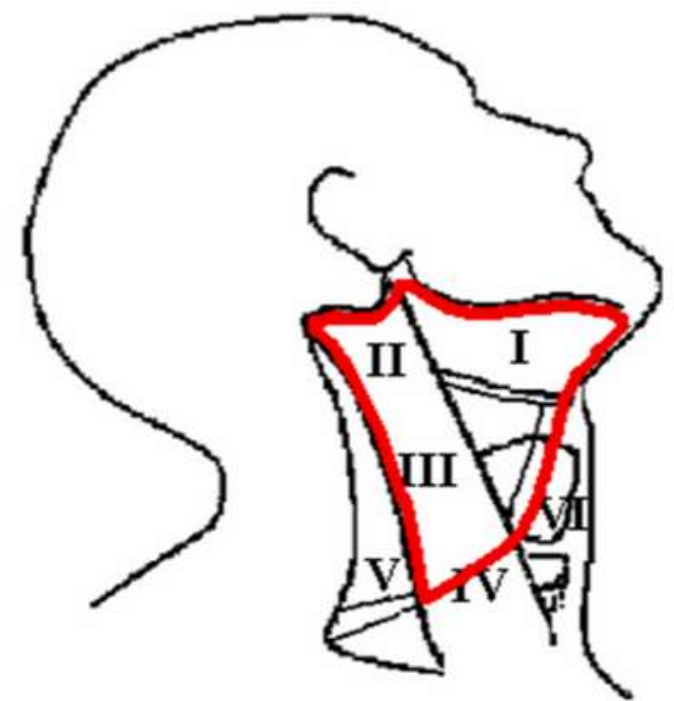
# Neck Dissection Types



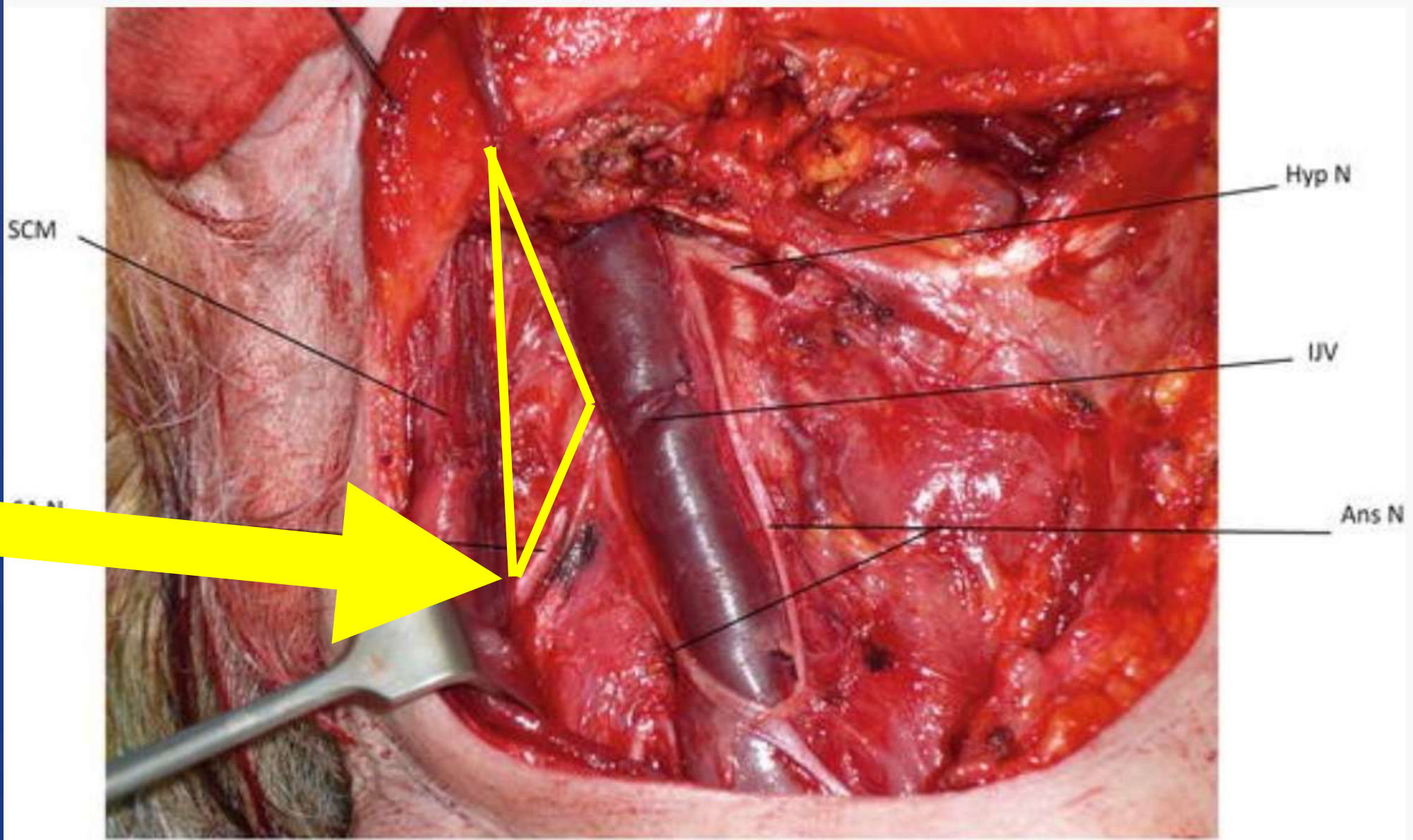
Lateral

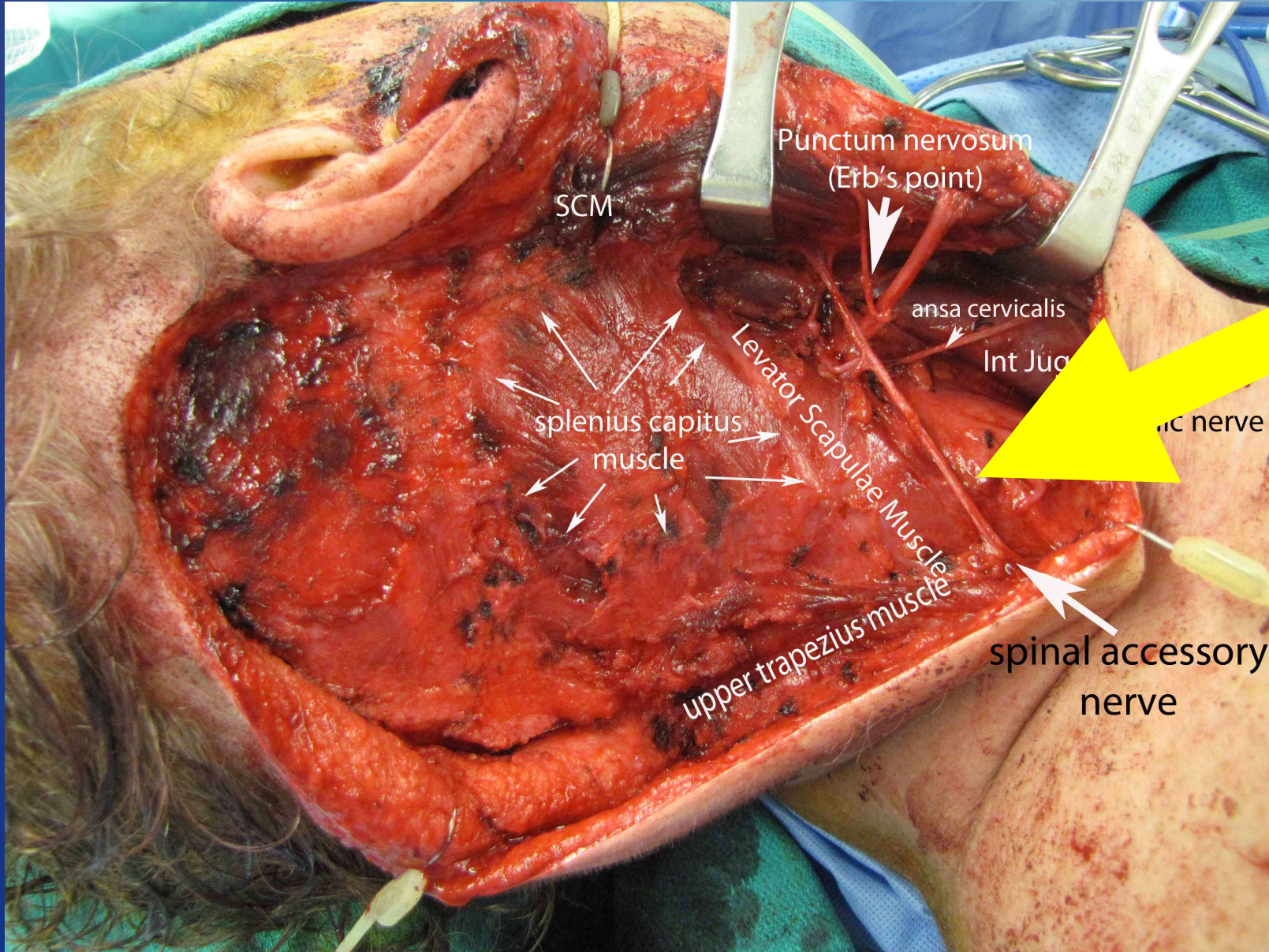


Posterolateral



Supraomohyoid





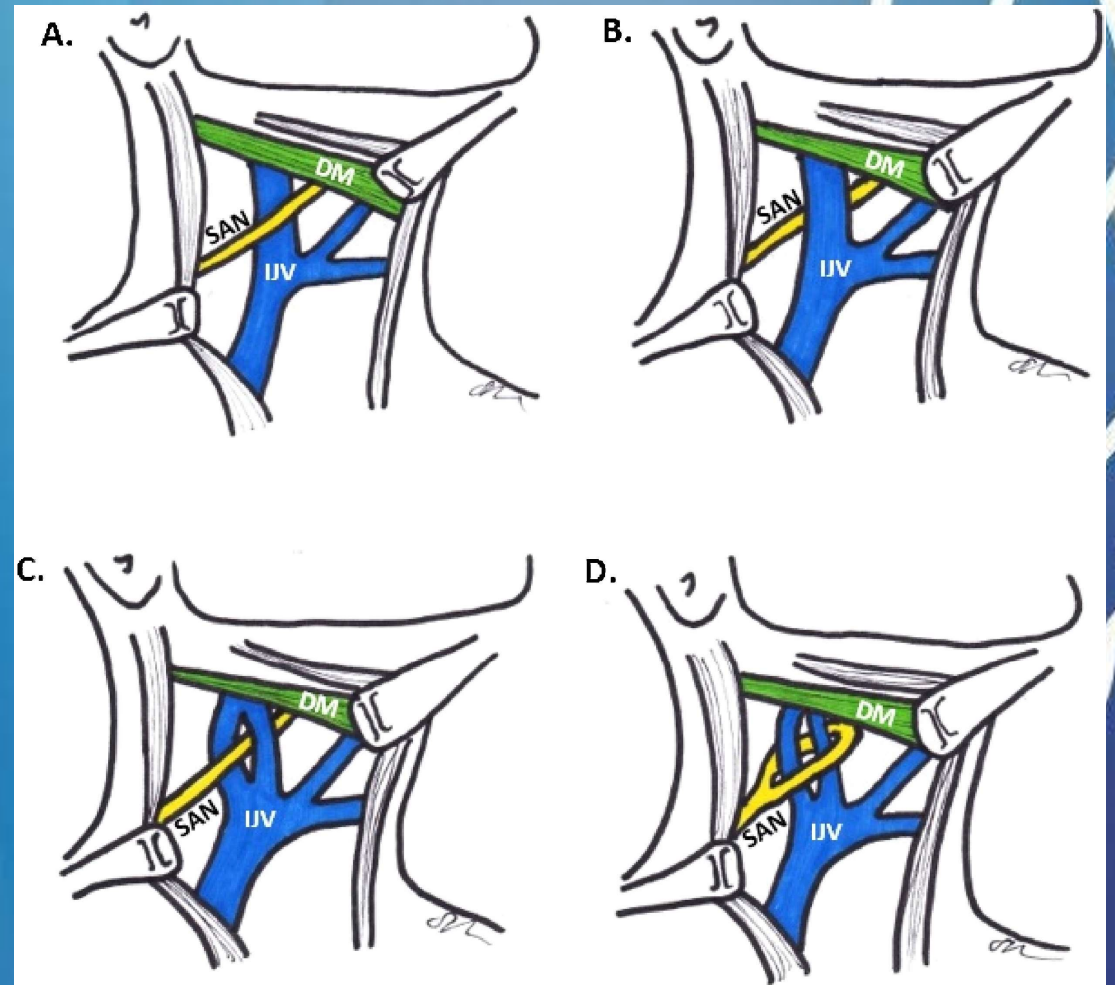
# The Surgeon's Responsibility

- Identification
- Preservation
- Repair



# Identification

- Meticulous dissection
- Anatomical landmarks
- Variations
- Pre-operative imaging



# Preservation

- Avoid or gentle traction
- Thermal injury
- Protect vasa nervorum
- Intraoperative nerve monitoring



# Repair

- Immediate
  - Direct end-to-end neurorrhaphy
  - Nerve graft
- Delay
- Neurolysis
- Nerve transfer



# Communication





# Shoulder dysfunction post neck dissection

RUTH PRICE

HEAD AND NECK ONCOLOGY PHYSIOTHERAPY CLINICAL LEAD

LIVERPOOL HEAD AND NECK CENTRE

# Contents

- ▶ Shoulder dysfunction – what does that mean?
- ▶ What to look out for
- ▶ Assessment and referral to physiotherapy
- ▶ Effects of radiotherapy on shoulder function
- ▶ Late effects and shoulder function

# Shoulder Dysfunction

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Neck dissection: most common surgical component of H&N Cancer treatment

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Shoulder dysfunction occurs in approx. 50% of patients with over 30% of patients still suffering with shoulder dysfunction at 12 months post op

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No national guidelines although NICE recommend “ **Shoulder rehabilitation 1.8.6** ”

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*Consider progressive resistance training for people with impaired shoulder function, as soon as possible after neck dissection”*

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Physiotherapy provision is not uniform often inpatient focused, if at all, with outpatient reviews being reactive due to lack of resource.

# What to look out for

- ▶ Muscle Wasting (can happen within a few weeks) Upper Traps wasting: dropped shoulder
- ▶ Partial paralysis of the SCM muscle – inability to rotate their head or bend it forward
- ▶ Asymmetric neckline
- ▶ Winged scapula and poor movement patterns
- ▶ Pain

# Basic Shoulder Assessment

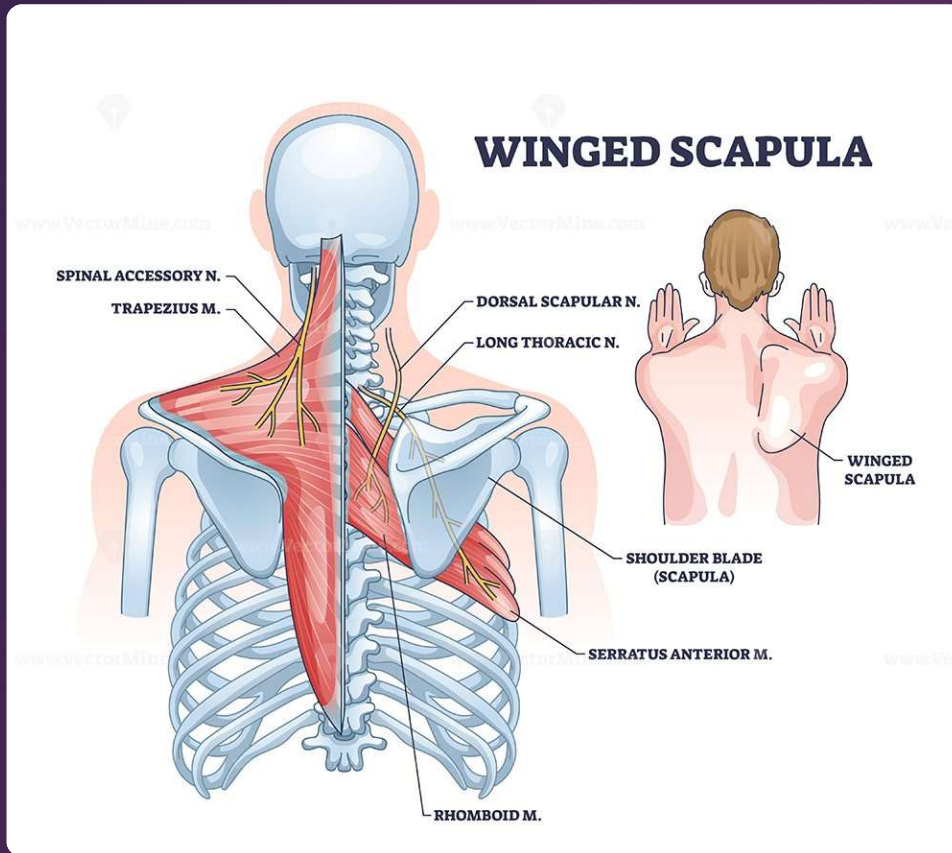
Posture

Symmetry

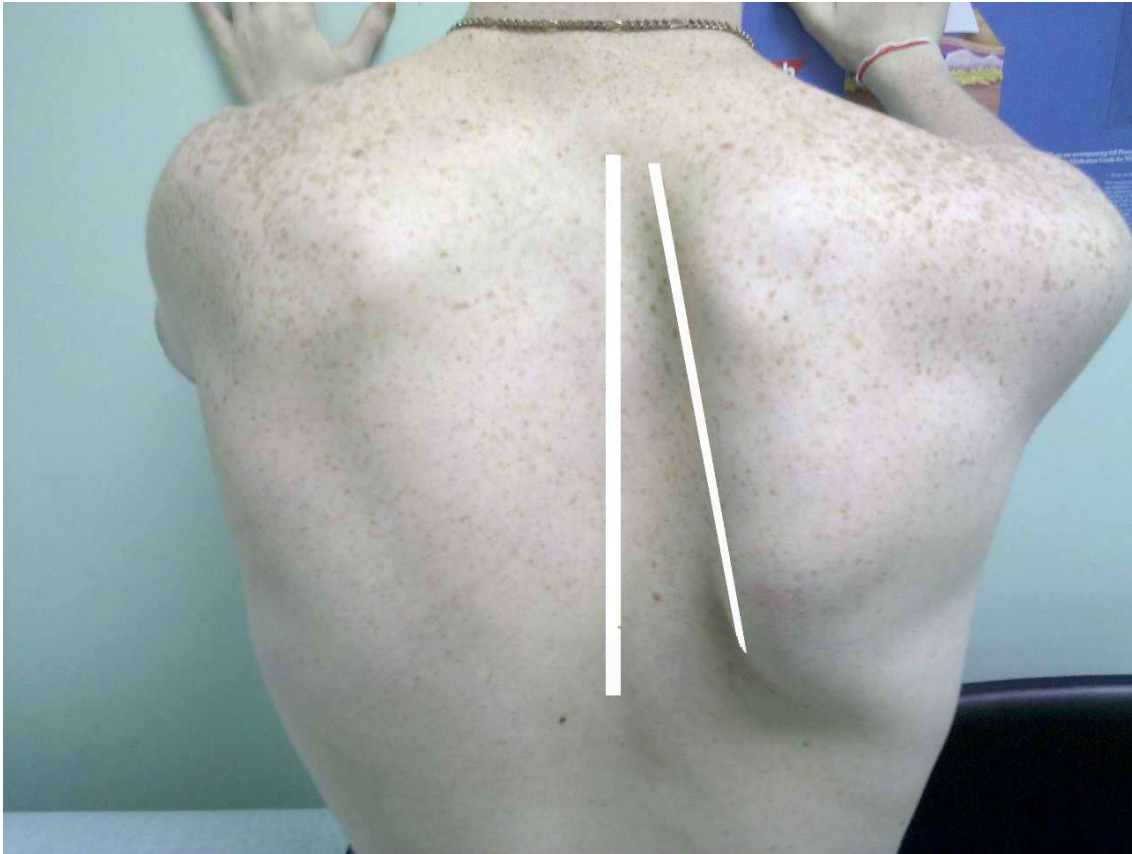
Palpation

Range of movement

Movement against resistance



# Winged Scapula



Laterally  
winged  
scapula  
(SAN palsy)

## Referral to Physio

Any concerns or changes - REFER

**ASK** about pain and ability to complete ADLS (SPADI)

Encourage movement, encourage activity

Early referral – variable across the country

Refer even if extended time since surgery managing patient's expectations

# Effects of radiotherapy



# Late effects and what to do

If the SAN was removed, likely to have permanent shoulder problems

Can prevent late effects by early referral to physio/picking up on acute problems

Increased length of time from surgery/radiotherapy to treating shoulder dysfunction decreases the chances of full recovery

Little evidence base re: time frames re: recovery if left untreated however appears to be earlier it's caught the better.

Work to  
improve  
patient  
pathway

NICE guidelines:  
more awareness of  
shoulder dysfunction

GRRAND trial

# Useful Information/Articles

- ▶ [Liverpool Head & Neck Centre | World-Class Research For Patient Care | Liverpool Head & Neck Centre](#)
- ▶ Getting recovery right after neck dissection (GRRAND): trial protocol for a multicentre, pragmatic randomised controlled trial with health economic evaluation and process evaluation. *BMJ Open* 2025
- ▶ [\*https://www.acprc.org.uk/media/gdwkmrll/124345-shoulder-rehabilitation-for-patients-undergoing-neck-dissection-for-head-and-neck-cancer-the-case-for-specialist-follow-up\*](https://www.acprc.org.uk/media/gdwkmrll/124345-shoulder-rehabilitation-for-patients-undergoing-neck-dissection-for-head-and-neck-cancer-the-case-for-specialist-follow-up)

# Q&A

- ▶ Please post your questions by clicking on question mark icon



## Panel



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# MDT Interface Webinar Series

Session 3: Mental Health and Head & Neck Cancer – The MDT Role

 Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2025 |  8:00 PM (BST) |  Online |  Free to attend

## Key Topics Covered

- Relationship between mental health and H&N cancer
- Clinical psychology role- including when to refer
- Asking about and acknowledging mental health
- Responding to suicidal thoughts and assessing risk
- Signposting and escalation

Short talks followed by Panel Discussion/Q&A

## Panel

**Elsbeth Desert**- Consultant Clinical Health Psychologist  
Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

**Jane Anderson**- Senior Lecturer in Advanced Clinical Practice (Mental Health)  
University of Huddersfield

 [Register here](#)  Queries: [bahnohow@gmail.com](mailto:bahnohow@gmail.com)

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- Calling for enthusiastic members to create a Multidisciplinary Education committee!
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- Promote collaboration!
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**Deadline Friday 12 December 2025!**

For more information see

[https://bahno.org.uk/news\\_and\\_events/news/212/bahno\\_education\\_committee/](https://bahno.org.uk/news_and_events/news/212/bahno_education_committee/)