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Leonard Malis

Leonard Malis was born in Philadelphia in 1919. Following his neurosurgical residency he was a Dazian Fellow in neurophysiology at Yale under John Fulton. It was during this period of time that he introduced the first true bipolar coagulator which was introduced into clinical use in 1953. As a member of the faculty of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine he was elevated to Chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery in 1970. His interest in microsurgery began in 1965 and by 1967 he had limited his practice to microsurgical procedures. A dry operative field for spine surgery was something unknown until the advent of improved patient positioning in the 1920s and hemorrhage control by cautery in 1926. It was Malis, in 1955, who first developed a true bipolar coagulating forcep. This was marketed to the profession in 1966. The introduction of bipolar coagulation was a important step in allowing spine surgeons to also become "microsurgeons." In addition to his pioneering of safer, and more effective microsurgical cautery Malis continued, throughout his professional career (he retired from practice in 1994), to contribute in many areas including prophylactic antibiotics and surgical instrumentation.

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