The cervical oesophagus can be approached from the right or left sides and there is little to choose between the two sides. The left side is the more common approach, however, as the oesophagus lies a little to the left of the midline in the neck.

**Operation**

**Position of patient**

1. The patient is placed supine. General anaesthesia using endotracheal intubation is usually performed. The shoulders are elevated to produce slight hyper-extension of the neck, the head is turned to the right and exposure is accomplished from the left. A right-sided approach is indicated occasionally.
Incision

2 The skin is incised along the anterior margin of the sternocleidomastoid muscle approximately on the line connecting the manubrial notch and the angle of the mandible.

3 For deep lesions an additional J extension of the skin incision above the manubrium sternum is helpful.

4 For cosmetic reasons, some authors prefer a more horizontal skin incision, as this may be placed in an even line with one of the skin wrinkles.