

## Book reviews

### *Minimally invasive spine surgery. A surgical manual. Second edition*

Edited by H M Mayer. 496 pages, Springer-Verlag, 2006  
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This is the second edition of a book that puts great effort into covering all aspects of minimally invasive surgery of the spine (MISS). It is edited by Michael Mayer, respected head and director of the Spine Center, Munich and for a long time one of the pioneers of minimally invasive surgery. This second edition shows the rapid development within the speciality: the number of pages and figures has more than doubled since the first edition 5 years ago. More than 70 authors have contributed, mainly from central Europe. The main aim of the book is to serve as a surgical manual and it does not pass any judgements on which techniques that are expected to survive, but gives an overview of the whole range of treatments available today.

The first 6 chapters start from very basic principles and definitions and continue with presentation of suitable instruments and operating theater setup. The possibility of using computer assistance in performing MISS is also described. After this background, 8 chapters on cervical, 13 on thoracic and 24 on lumbar spine surgery are presented. The individual chapters are thoroughly structured and easy to overview. The illustrations are generally of high quality—some of the best I have seen in a textbook. All chapters are between 5 and 15 pages long and concentrate on the surgical techniques, but also include parts on indications, advantages and disadvantages, and also complications. The chapters can be read individually when the reader is faced with a specific problem, but the book is so well written and well structured that it is a pleasure to read it from beginning to end.

Some of the topics such as different aspects of microsurgical techniques for disc and decompressive surgery have been adapted to spine surgery in

many departments. On the other hand, many novel and as yet poorly documented techniques that are described, such as for example dynamic stabilization (Dynesys, DIAM and the Wallis implant), still have to prove their value in long-term follow-up studies. In addition, 2 chapters on autologous chondrocyte transplantation and autologous disc-derived chondrocyte transplantation are provided. These are exciting exponents of the biological approach in spine surgery, but it remains to be seen whether they will work in the long-term.

Certainly, a book like this cannot ignore the current trend of disc arthroplasty. Minimally invasive nucleus pulposus replacement and a mini-open midline access for lumbar total disc replacement are also presented, the latter with very nice demonstrations of how to solve the potential problems with the large retroperitoneal vessels.

When reviewing a book, one is expected to have some negative comments also. That would be difficult in this case, but improvement of the English in some chapters would have been appropriate. Also, in discussing interspinous implants, the X-Stop, which is not included, is more scientifically documented than the ones presented in this volume. Having so many different authors means that some repetitions are unavoidable. The phrase “micro-/mini-invasive” is repeated on many occasions and becomes almost like a mantra; but this is good in a way—minimally invasive surgery is not just a mechanical technique but also a way of thinking about and approaching spine surgery for the individual surgeon.

This excellent book is a must for everyone interested in spine surgery, and I look forward to the year 2010 when editor Mayer will present the third

edition which, if in line with the rapid evolution of the subject, will probably be a four-volume book of 3,000 pages. The concept of this book is certainly here to stay.

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