

## Book review

### *Rockwood, Green, and Wilkins' handbook of fractures*

Koval, 480 pages, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Philadelphia 2001

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The 5th edition of Rockwood and Green's "Fractures in Adults" has now been released. The first edition of this now classical work was published in 1974. The time between the appearance of another edition has become ever shorter over these 30 years and, as stated in the preface, it reflects the rapid advances in the science and practice of musculoskeletal trauma management and the increasing need for an up-to-date reference book on fractures. This is certainly a relevant statement and, indeed, has become still more important with the increased need for evidence-based scientific and clinical information. The new edition, as usual, consists of 2 volumes and is divided to 51 chapters. 74 co-authors have contributed to it, 6 from Canada, 1 from Europe and the remaining 67 authors are from the USA. No fewer than two-thirds of the chapters are written by new authors and there are several completely new chapters including the biomechanics of fracture and implants, classifications of fractures, penetrating trauma, anesthetic management, traumatic amputations, nonoperative care of fractures, vascular injuries, compartment syndromes and workers' compensation. All these new chapters are excellent and should be of great value not only to the experienced trauma surgeon, but also to the younger and less experienced ones. This new edition and the previous ones come with a CD-ROM with complete text and illustrations. The 5th CD-ROM edition is updated and expanded, including a program for easy access and reference to specific surgical procedures. However, the CD-ROM is not included in the present review. The target audience is identical with previous ones and should be familiar to most readers. A consequence of engaging only authors from level-I trauma centers is the tendency throughout this book to concentrate on the complex injury caused by high-energy impact. This by no means reduces

the book's value and I do not consider it a negative feature for the following reasons.

First, it reflects the differences in trauma scenarios and characteristics at a level-I trauma center in the USA compared to the average regional or local hospital in Europe. Secondly, the editor presumably believes that recruitment of co-authors is simpler and the work can be done more easily in busy centers where time and resources are available for collection data and documentation. Thirdly, and perhaps most important, is the fact that most orthopedic surgeons still hardly see any complex musculoskeletal injuries and therefore need access to a well organized and up-to-date reference book. This edition fulfils these requirements well. In addition, most chapters, including the management of osteoporotic fractures, with the general principles accepted in Europe. The organization of the text is essentially standardized and remains about the same as in previous editions, starting with an introduction covering basic concepts, followed by a historical review, surgical anatomy, surgical approaches, treatment options, complications and the authors' preferred methods. The overall quality of illustrations and page design is superb, with few exceptions, and the addition of highlights on indications, pitfalls and specific surgical procedures makes it easier to use as a quick reference for the busy surgeon and it is, indeed, appreciated. The book could be even more effective if the first page of each chapter had been shown in the index, with the page number for the various sections included in the chapter. Surgical anatomy, surgical approaches and dissection techniques are well illustrated and this part of the management is not often the most difficult and important part of both the preoperative planning and the surgical management of musculoskeletal injuries. The mixture of centimeters and inches

throughout the book is slightly disturbing as also are the conflicting recommendations such as to use or not use a tourniquet during debridement of an open fracture. Various acceptable alternatives are often available for trauma management that lead to comparable results, but performing a debridement with or without a tourniquet perhaps stretches the limits too far. It is certainly not easy for the occasional trauma surgeon to know what to do and impossible to evaluate the relevance of all the references in the book. Most chapters contain more than 200-300 and one chapter no less than 1032 references! Perhaps this is just a tradition, but it seems doubtful whether so many references really contribute to the already high quality of this book. Finally, there is some dispute as regards the management of undisplaced femoral neck fractures that merits comment. In chapter 15, entitled *Non-operative fracture treatment*, the author recommends functional treatment in most patients with impacted femoral neck fractures, but in chapter 38, entitled *Femoral neck fractures*, the author recommends stabilization of all undisplaced neck fractures (in the absence of medical contraindications), to simplify the patient's rehabilitation and prevent a large minority of them from becoming

secondarily displaced. The interval between the two latest editions is 5 years and this may be the minimum time required for such an extensive overhaul and revision. If the book were to be completely replaced by the CD-ROM version, which theoretically would be possible, revisions and up-dating would become less work intensive, cheaper and more frequent. It is uncertain whether this is unavoidable, but there are several definite advantages in having access to a written book. It is not only the physical contact but, more important, the immediate access and complete control over all information contained. Access to computers will at times be restricted, impractical or even impossible. Reading this excellent book has, with very few exceptions, been a pure pleasure. It will really fulfil its aim as an excellent guide for trauma orthopedic surgeons in need of easy accessible guidance in most aspects of orthopedic trauma surgery or if they merely want to extend and up-date their knowledge in orthopedic trauma surgery from various viewpoints.

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