

## Book review

### *Functional reconstruction of the foot and ankle*

S. T. Hansen Jr, 525 pages, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Philadelphia 2000

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Sigvard T Hansen, a well known foot surgeon, has to be congratulated for an excellent attempt to distill 30 years of experience in operative and non-operative care of the foot and ankle in this most impressive and, by Phyllis Wood, so wonderfully illustrated volume.

Acute trauma and fracture surgery and reconstructive surgery of the foot and ankle are covered in the first half of the book. The second half is an atlas of standard operative techniques with high quality drawings and complete coverage of every imaginable procedure. The text is very personal and reflects the author's vast experience.

Most of the procedures described in the atlas have been used by the author for at least 5 years and produced satisfactory results. This part is a true pleasure to read. It contains detailed descriptions of every procedure and also gives the experienced foot surgeon a tremendous number of practical tips about exposure, handling of the soft tissues, osteosynthesis techniques, peroperative dangers and postoperative complications.

The author is very fond of K-wires, screws and plates, but contrary to Scandinavian practice, the use of staples for midfoot arthrodeses is not mentioned. It is certainly easy to place one or two screws in a drawing, but in my experience there are occasions when tissues not visualized in the drawings might disturb, or even make the correct placement of screws impossible. In such cases, I have found staples to be useful! The author achieves accuracy in drilling without the use of fluoroscopy, but rather with triangulation technique, with the surgeon controlling drilling in the horizontal plane and the assistant in the vertical one.

There is a separate chapter on surgical instruments used in foot surgery, including even preferred types of suture materials. The place now

occupied by the names and addresses of various instrument manufacturers (sponsoring the volume?) could have been used for more information on different types of screws (lag, cancellous, cannulated).

There is a very good chapter on functional anatomy. The author stresses gastrocnemius contraction and first metatarsal dysfunction, as a predominant trait in the dysfunctioning foot and concludes that many problems (hallux valgus, metatarsalgia, posterior tibial tendon dysfunction and even plantar fasciitis) are caused by an atavistic trait. Even for a non-believer, this theory serves as a good model for understanding both certain pathophysiological mechanisms and some of the treatment philosophies.

The chapter on the rheumatoid foot is rather short, but this is compensated for by the in-depth explanatory texts accompanying the descriptions of different surgical techniques. However, I miss the Stainsby procedure (resection of half of the proximal phalanges and plantar capsulotomy). I am also surprised that the author in spite of his large experience does not mention retrograde intramedullary nailing for ankle and talo-calcaneal fusion, not even in the chapter on treatment of failed ankle fusion or replacement. It might of course be that he has not yet 5 years of experience with it. In my experience, this is a very safe method to use for failed ankle arthroplasty, an operation which, in Sigvard T Hansen's hands, however, has the same success rate as hip and knee replacement!

Many surgical texts pay less attention to postoperative care. This book is an exception. Besides detailed instructions on after-care for every procedure, there is a very nice section on elevation ischemia in the chapter on compartmental syndromes of the foot. Elevation of an injured or operated leg is a "holy" treatment principle in many

hospitals, at least in Scandinavia. The author stresses the very serious problem that can arise from the misconception that if some elevation is good, more elevation is better! Decreasing post-operative elevation to at most 15 cm above the heart is probably preferable to increasing the dosage of narcotic analgetics.

The references are sparse, which probably reflects the fact that this is not a textbook but rather the memoirs of Sigvard T. Hansen. Some statements, however, could have been supported by one or two references for the curious reader. For example, it is stated that “most cases of calcaneal tendon rupture necessitate operative treatment to achieve a satisfactory result”. In my department, we stopped suturing ruptured Achilles tendons 20 years ago and we would probably not have continued this treatment, if we had mostly unsatisfactory results.

There are some mistakes in page referrals in the table of contents and what one is looking for. We all know how little time there is for final proof reading and this could easily be improved in the next edition which probably will be issued in 7–8 years’ time according to the present tradition for other masterpieces of orthopedic surgery, e.g., Campell’s Operative Orthopaedics.

The experiences of Sigvard T. Hansen presented in this excellent volume, which can be used both as a textbook and an atlas of operative techniques, should be enjoyed by every orthopedic surgeon and it could probably replace most of the books on foot surgery already on the shelves of surgeons and medical libraries.

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