

## Book reviews

### *Medical problems of the instrumentalist musician*

Raoul Tubiana and Peter C Amadio, 626 pages, Martin Dunitz, London 2000

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Would doctors not particularly interested in music benefit from reading a book about medical problems of musicians? The answer is yes, because musicians constitute an extraordinary patient population. They willingly expose themselves to massive risk factors for musculoskeletal occupational disorders and, in case they get one, are usually highly motivated to rehabilitate themselves. The study of musicians' disorders can therefore yield important insight into the mechanisms underlying ordinary people's common problems with pain in the upper extremities. The book by Raoul Tubiana and Peter C Amadio is a good survey of the present state of knowledge in this field. Those with a special interest in treating musicians will read this book with pleasure.

Following a number of chapters on anatomy, biomechanics, neurophysiology and psychology, the book focuses on occupational disorders and overuse syndrome with no less than 7 chapters on focal dystonia, followed by chapters on rehabilitation and prevention. Many chapters have a clearly scientific approach, describing studies using functional brain imaging techniques, 3-dimensional motion analyses and modern psychological questionnaires. As for treatment and rehabilitation, the authors have had to fall back on experience rather than research. These chapters, however, appear quite useful, since they give good advice.

38 authors contribute to 32 chapters. With so many contributors, it is impossible to avoid some redundancy, and the quality of the chapters varies. 13 of the contributors are from France and the re-

mainder from England and the USA. Judging from their writing, there seems to be a more advanced and scientific approach to musicians' problems in France. This impression may partly be an effect of writing style: many chapters could have been more concise. Sentences like "much of the effort in playing musical instruments comes from the upper extremities" (page 69) make you lose interest in whatever else the authors may have to say.

On the other hand, one can accept nonsense such as "Jung's concept of the anima" in the context of focal dystonia, or "energy flow" through various body parts, so long as it is only a part of the author's presentation of valuable clinical experience.

This book provides a lot of interesting reading although not very much may be clinically useful at present. Many chapters are well written and the book keeps a good balance between physiology and psychology in the performance of music. It is reassuring to find that musicians' problems are now being studied with scientific methods and not merely described in case reports. So far, scientific methods have been used mainly for analyzing the nature of the musicians' problems. Hopefully, treatment and rehabilitation principles, tried out in prospective randomized studies, will give information of use to a larger population of everyday non-musicians.

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## **Master techniques in orthopaedic surgery on CD-ROM: The spine**

Volume editor: David S. Bradford, CD-ROM editor: Samuel J. Chewning, Jr., Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Philadelphia 2000

“The medium is the message” (McLuhan) say believers in a radical change in human attitudes and knowledge with the development and proliferation of “new” media. The new electronic means of communication will revolutionize our ways to accumulate and transfer knowledge. Although one is inclined to feel sympathetic to such views, recent examples are rather disappointing. The transfer of a rather poor idea from book to electronic form does not transfer it automatically into a brilliant new feature of education. It seems that a clear message is necessary after all. New media probably require new ideas and new means to transfer them.

This CD-ROM is a good example of the possibilities and limitations of the new “electronic books”. It is an electronic version of the book series of “Master techniques in orthopaedic surgery”, which consists of a collection of surgical techniques on a subject provided by some “famous” surgeons in the field. This method can be criticized as being a poor educational instrument because of the lack of critical assessment of existing practices, which should be expected from a serious textbook. Moreover, lack of serious editing leads often to a multitude of diverse approaches to a subject and a variety of styles without permitting the student to develop a comprehensive idea about the possibilities and problems involved. The presentation of a not very brilliant idea in electronic format does not solve any of these problems.

This CD-ROM consists of 26 chapters grouped into 3 sections: the surgical approaches, surgical techniques concerning cervical spine and the thoracolumbar spine. Each chapter deals with indications, preoperative aspects, surgery, complications, and suggested readings, which can all be separately. Figures are available by clicking on their numbers in the text. So far, this is not very different from a conventional book. Indexing and quick search are undoubtedly easier than in a traditional book. In addition, there is a Visual Summary section for many of the chapters, containing

a video clip highlighting the essential features of the chapter. The Visual Summary and Figures can also be bladed separately. Part 1 is a description of surgical approaches to the cervical and thoracolumbar spine. Curiously, only anterior approaches are described. This part, with its superb animation videos, illustrates the educational possibilities of the new media. A description of surgical approaches, using high quality 3-D video animations, will probably prove better than its counterparts in traditional book form. As regards the other two parts, as in the earlier printed forms, each chapter represents the personal ideas and preferences of the author, which leads to a substantial variation in the quality not only of the texts and figures, but also of the Visual Summaries. Many aspects of spinal surgery, ranging from HNP surgery to decompressions and instrumentations are dealt with. Some chapters have high quality up-to-date approaches while others show purely personal preferences and “idiosyncrasies” of the author. All contributors, except two Japanese surgeons, are from North American clinics so that North American preferences, preoccupations and concerns are easily recognized. Therefore a European spine surgeon will often have an impression of outdated material.

If you enjoy this book series of “Master techniques” you will find the CD-ROM more attractive than the traditional book. All information is easily accessible, figures are generally of good quality. Pictures showing the steps in a certain procedure and the visual summaries illustrate well the general choice of treatment of the section surgeon. For its educational approach of the “Master techniques”, the electronic form is certainly preferable. I do not know for whom this electronic book can be recommended. Experienced spine surgeons will not find much new information here, although they might find the video animations charming. An overworked resident would probably only watch the animation films, which would make them more susceptible to intellectual

sloth. Perhaps a medical student interested in orthopaedic surgery? But such a student would get very strange ideas about spinal surgery and would probably think that we inject methacrylate cement into rheumatoid necks or still bind cervical vertebrae with each other, using do-it-yourself wires and plates or that we still use a kind of Harrington rods for anterior spine surgery or that we put hooks onto a scoliotic spine without correcting it. Such a highly diverse series of chapters may be

valuable for future historians of the late 20th century surgical practices in North America if, of course, they are able to read the late 20th century electronic formats.

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