

Book review

Whiplash injuries: Current concepts in prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of the cervical whiplash syndrome

Gunzburg R, Szpalski M (editors), 368 pages, Lippincott-Raven, Philadelphia 1997
ISBN 0-397-51856-0

There are increasing numbers of whiplash injuries to the neck in road traffic accidents, or at least a marked rise in the number of claims for compensation for such injuries. Yet there is still considerable uncertainty and controversy about the exact nature of the underlying physical pathology, and about the physical basis and even the validity of chronic symptoms and disability after what is often an ill-defined soft tissue injury. Orthopedic surgeons are seeing increasing numbers of patients for treatment and are expected to prepare medico-legal reports, so would benefit from more knowledge.

This book offers a concise review of current knowledge and theories about the pathology of whiplash injuries, and is at least a partial answer to that need. It is really the proceedings of an international conference held in Brussels in November 1996. The editors have gathered a broad raft of international experts who cover a wide range of aspects: anatomy and biomechanics, epidemiology, diagnosis, medical and surgical treatment, neurologic and psychologic consequences, long-term follow-up, disability and impairment evaluation, and legislative issues. This book should give the reader a more global view and better

understanding of all the issues surrounding whiplash injuries. It should help orthopedic surgeons to offer patients better clinical management and, equally important, a more accurate prognosis. It should also provide a better background for expert reports and opinions.

Inevitably, such a book is a patchwork of different perspectives and theories and sometimes conflicting views, but that is its strength more than a weakness. This book does not give the final answer on whiplash injuries and indeed raises more questions than it answers, but I believe that is indeed an accurate reflection of our current state of knowledge. The editors are to be commended for the way they have selected and presented such a balanced review. Every orthopedic surgeon who treats whiplash injuries or prepares medical reports on them should look at this book. That is especially true for those who believe they know the answer to whiplash.

Gordon Waddell

*The Glasgow Nuffield Hospital, 25 Beaconsfield Rd,
Glasgow G12 0PJ, Scotland*