

Book reviews

Surgery of the cervical spine

H S An and J Simpson (editors), 448 pages, Martin Dunitz Ltd, London, 1994
ISBN 1-85317-104-2

This richly illustrated textbook is written by 21 orthopedic surgeons, 2 neurosurgeons, 1 radiologist and 1 rehabilitation specialist. It starts with the proper base for all surgery, anatomy, and the first chapter gives an exhaustive review of skeletal, muscular, ligamentous, and neural structures. Excellent schematic drawings are interfoliated with radiographs as well as high-quality photographic color prints. The bony and soft tissue structures are illustrated in a systematic and didactic way, and the pictures are presented so that one can easily remember all variations of structure.

Different surgical approaches to the cervical spine are discussed and the accompanying illustrations are excellent. The chapter on biomechanics of the normal cervical spine makes it easy to understand both function and form and to appreciate fully the seven neck bones and their attaching structures before considering operative treatment.

Clinical evaluation is discussed and schematically illustrated in one chapter, and a very crucial element in cervical spine disease—namely, non-surgical evaluation, treatment and rehabilitation—in another.

The chapter on radiology of the cervical spine includes a number of MRI illustrations, and a series of traumatic cases are illustrated with pre- as well as postoperative radiographs, also including some nicely illustrated surgical pitfalls.

3 chapters deal with degenerative disc disease, and different anterior as well as posterior surgical procedures are described. Fusion with and without discectomy—as well as the use of autograft versus allo-

graft—is discussed. The description of posterior approaches, including “open door” laminoplasty is nicely illustrated with black and white drawings.

In a chapter dealing with traumatic injuries of the cervical spine, the vast experience from the Thomas Jefferson Hospital is fully documented. The trauma chapters also include injuries in skeletally immature patients.

The text on tumors of the cervical spine would be better with more illustrations, and the chapter on rheumatoid arthritis, only partly covering the present spectrum of surgical methods, would also benefit from some more radiographs and MRI illustrations.

The book ends with a relatively short but well written chapter on complications of cervical spine surgery.

The illustrations provided are useful for all surgeons responsible for patients with cervical spine disease. The reader gets excellent information on how to handle individual patients, and by understanding the aspects of normal anatomy and of pathophysiology as well as surgical alternatives, he will be able to act in a rational fashion.

In conclusion, this textbook covers well the area of cervical spine surgery, and it is warmly recommended for the library of any neurosurgeon or orthopedic surgeon interested in cervical spine disease.

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Medicolegal reporting in orthopaedic trauma

M A Foy and P S Fagg (editors), 496 pages, Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, 1995
ISBN 044 304834 7

This loose-leaf text comprising more than 500 pages has been revised and updated since the first edition was published in 1990. The current format allows easy updating of topics without the need to purchase a completely new text. The authors intend this publication to be a source of prognostic information following musculoskeletal injuries.

There are 5 main sections, each divided into several subsections. The first introduces the role of the orthopedic surgeon in the medicolegal process. Contributions from a surgeon versed in the requirements of medicolegal reporting highlight the general principles of acquiring information for a report, while those from two litigation solicitors present guidelines for the presentation of the information. Their combined efforts make this not only a very readable section but one that uncovers a multitude of nuances easily overlooked by the novice orthopedic surgeon.

The second section deals with injuries of the upper limb and it has been subdivided into anatomic regions. Information pertaining to the shoulder, humerus and elbow is comprehensive and clearly presented. The tables refer to large series and have been intelligently constructed to highlight specific points. The section on forearm fractures is not as concise or erudite, and the reader is left a little confused as to the arguments for or against operative or non-operative treatment. Notwithstanding this, the information provided on synostosis and refracture after plate removal is excellent. The section on the wrist deals very well with the difficult problem of distal radial fractures, with a good synthesis of existing knowledge regarding the treatment and outcome after this injury. Injuries of the carpal bones and the concomitant patterns of carpal instability are presented didactically, but appear to be beyond the scope of this book, as well as of most general orthopedic surgeons. The final subsection in the upper limb series refers to hand injuries and covers nerve injuries well. However, the implications of bone and tendon injuries have not been given the same attention as those concerning injuries to other parts of the upper limb.

The section on lower limb injuries is excellent. The more common injuries such as hip, femoral shaft and ankle fractures are thoughtfully compiled and clearly presented. Only major classification systems which are pertinent to prognosis have been discussed in any

depth. The author's attempt at addressing special groups of combined fractures, e.g., femoral shaft fracture with ipsilateral hip, patella or tibial fracture is useful and should be well received by the reader. Like the hand, post-traumatic foot problems can be a disheartening challenge. In this field, the author has complied strictly with his aim of presenting information of prognostic value and this should be of great value to the reader. The subsection on calcaneal fractures is particularly noteworthy.

The penultimate section refers to fractures of the axial skeleton. Information regarding the pelvis and the cervical and thoracolumbar spine is well presented. In contrast, the weakness of the section on traumatic spinal cord injuries is due to its generality and paucity of references. While interesting, the information provided may not assist the surgeon to the same extent as other sections.

The final section deals with miscellaneous topics, e.g., repetitive strain injury, soft tissue injuries, peripheral nerve injuries, psychological effects of trauma and post-traumatic reflex sympathetic dystrophy. The subsections on peripheral nerve injuries and post-traumatic reflex sympathetic dystrophy are excellent and, like most of this text, highlight the use of simple classifications, concisely describe pathogenesis, and discuss the prognosis after injury and treatment. Thoughtful referencing in these two topics enhances their value. The subsections dealing with repetitive strain injury and soft tissue injuries do not conform with the aims of this text. Information in the former, while interesting, fails to discuss the outcome of the injury or treatment in any depth and therefore offers little more than any other general text on the topic. The topic on soft tissue injuries seemed to be more concerned with the flap reconstructive options than the outcome of different injury patterns.

This is an excellent text and should be a welcome addition to the reference libraries of orthopedic departments where residents and less experienced surgeons may be called upon to provide medicolegal reports or to attend court as medical witnesses.

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