Book reviews

The textbook of spinal surgery

Keith H Bridwell and Ronald I DeWald (Eds), 1256 pages, J B Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, 1991
ISBN 0-397-51098-5

Operative spinal surgery

M J Torrens and R A Dickson (Eds), 333 pages, Churchill Livingstone, London 1991
ISBN 0-443-03922-4

Two books on spinal surgery have emerged on the market simultaneously. *The Textbook of Spinal Surgery* is in two volumes edited by two American orthopedic surgeons, while *Operative Spinal Surgery* in the series *Practice of Surgery* is edited by one neurosurgeon and one orthopedic surgeon, both from the UK.

The Textbook of Spinal Surgery covers surgical approaches, deformities, degenerative conditions, trauma and tumor in a most comprehensive manner. The major part of volume 1 is dedicated to scoliosis and is very complete, whereas the part on surgical approaches to the spine could well be expanded and also contain more illustrations, especially as far as the lumbar spine is concerned. In the chapter on *Degenerative conditions* the parts on spinal stenosis and spondylolisthesis are well written and so is the chapter by Henry La Rocca on *Failed lumbar surgery syndromes: Causes and correctives.* The trauma part is up to date and complete, whereas postoperative treatment is not discussed very thoroughly. The final part on tumors, partly illustrated in color is interesting and very good as far as primary tumors of the spine are concerned, while the chapter on metastatic disease of the spine is good but should be expanded far beyond the 50 pages used.

Operative Spinal Surgery follows a somewhat different concept. It should be looked upon as a manual of spinal surgery, and is extremely well illustrated with schematic drawings. It is mainly written for the advanced spinal surgeon, the text is rather dogmatic and the references are few. Concerning transpedicular fixation techniques, the book is fairly superficial, in the light of the very widespread use of that technique today. Instead, Knodt rods and the Hartshill rectangle fixation system have been given one full chapter each. In the text on the history of transpedicular fixation, Roy-Camille's name is not even mentioned! Surgical treatment of spinal fracture is not given much attention, possibly reflecting the predominant British view on spinal fracture treatment. 9 of the 23 chapters are written by Torrens, a majority of the remainder by other Britons, and a minor part by surgeons from the U.S.A. and Switzerland. The last chapter, *Spinal surgery for pain,* is a thorough and informative review of invasive treatment of spinal pain today. As an appendix we are given the names and addresses of 25 suppliers of equipment and surgical instruments in the UK and U.S.A.

While sharing the same topic, the two books are very different and will attract different readers. *The Textbook of Spinal Surgery* is a systematic review of spinal disorders and their surgical treatment today, scientifically based and with a large number of references, whereas *Operative Spinal Surgery* is a manual of surgical practice to be studied before performing a certain operation; the former addresses the subject of why you perform a spinal operation, and the latter how to perform it. Both books are highly recommendable to spinal surgeons, while the *Textbook of Spinal Surgery* may be of interest to anybody working in fields related to the spine.

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