BOOK REVIEWS

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Neurosurgery: Principles and Practice

ANNE MOORE, DAVID NEWELL

EXTENT P/H	687 p, hardback
PRICE/ISBN	£99.00 185233522X
PUBLISHER	Springer (Berlin), 2005
REVIEWER	Richard Cowie
STAR RATING	****

This new book should be on every neurosurgical trainee's desk. A group of acknowledged experts from the UK and the US have been selected by the editors to contribute chapters that cover their respective topics in a practical, yet innovative, way. Their aim to present an up-to-date synopsis, for residents and registrars in training and recent graduates of training programmes, has been very successful.

The chapters are arranged in broad topics, which begin with investigations of the neurosurgical patient, followed by a section on peri-operative care including anaesthesia and intensive care. The next section deals with areas where recent technical developments have occurred: neuro-endoscopy, image-guided surgery and stereotactic radiosurgery. Subsequently, a group of chapters are devoted to the management of intracranial tumours including low- and high-grade gliomas, sella and parasella lesions, meningiomas, intraventricular and pineal region tumours together with those involving the cerebellar pontine angle. A section on skull-based tumours not dealt with elsewhere is followed by a chapter on the management of cerebral metastases and primary cerebral lymphoma.

The vascular section begins with a review of the physiology of cerebral blood flow and techniques employed for pre- and peri-operative assessment. An excellent chapter on the management of patients by interventional neuroradiology is quite properly sandwiched between those dealing with aneurysmal subarachnoid haemorrhage and arterial venous malformations, given the importance of this technique to the management of patients with such conditions. Somewhat illogically, the chapter on ischaemic stroke and carotid endarterectomy is at the very back of the book rather than being included in this section.

It is refreshing to see a chapter on the rehabilitation of neurologically injured patients alongside those dealing with severe head and spinal injuries. In the past, this area has been neglected but the importance of multidisciplinary teams of rehabilitation specialists to the management of postoperative patients is obvious to all who work in a neuroscience department.

Hydrocephalus is dealt with separately from the section on paediatric neurosurgery, which comprises chapters on the management of sporadic and syndromic craniosynostosis, spinal dysraphism and paediatric neuro-oncology.

Subsequent sections deal with the spine, peripheral and cranial nerve injury, functional neurosurgery and infection. I was surprised to find that degenerative disease of the lumbar and thoracic spine is not included, given the large number of patients who present to all neurosurgical units and the recent controversies in surgical management by instrumented fusion or disc replacement.

Despite these criticisms, this is an excellent new book, full of applied basic neuroscience and practical clinical advice yet unafraid to confront difficulties in the management of neurosurgical pathology. It bridges the gap between journal articles and reviews on the one hand and multi-volume texts on the other. It can be recommended for all those beginning a neurosurgical career but there is also much in it which will refresh the knowledge of established surgeons, particularly when subspecialisation has meant that they have become less familiar with some areas of neurosurgical practice. I consider this to be an excellent book that will have broad appeal across neurosurgery.

Resource Management in Health and Social Care: Essential Checklists

WILLIAM BRYANS

EXTENT P/H	147 p, paperback
PRICE/ISBN	£21.95 1857756274
PUBLISHER	Radcliffe (Oxford), 2005
REVIEWER	David Fillingham
STAR RATING	***

It was Oscar Wilde who warned against 'men who know the price of everything but the value of nothing'. Although he wasn't referring to healthcare economists, he easily might have been! Fortunately, in his recent book, William Bryans has shown himself to be adept at applying economic concepts in a way that makes clear their reliance upon values of equity and quality. As such, his book is an interesting and useful primer in management issues which will be of particular interest to clinicians becoming more heavily involved in the field.

Bryans' book is wide ranging in its attempt to apply economic and management concepts to everyday NHS life. The topics covered range from the macro-funding of the NHS to detailed advice on budget management at the departmental level. The book's stated aim is to have 'an emphasis on the practical and what to do next' and it strives hard to live up to this laudable goal. Some aspects seem a little out of date despite being so recently published. For example, it talks about long trolley waits, which are almost a thing of the past in the majority of accident and emergency departments.

In the main, however, it provides relevant and interesting information for the informed reader on the relationships between quality, public expectations and costs. The challenges of managing within tight resource limits and the difficult human relations and organisational political issues involved in managing to a budget are well brought out. The book sets out to provide a bridge between principles and practice and its use of mini case studies to achieve this is both informative and entertaining. Indeed, many will empathise with Mr H O'Chondriac who was admitted to St Beadful Hospital. Unfortunately, however, it never quite achieves its stated ambition of delivering every budget manager's dream – 'how to make significant savings from already overstretched resources'.

It is somewhat surprising that there is little on the most recent evidence-based approaches to quality improvement such as total quality management, six sigma or lean thinking. These disciplines have been shown in other sectors and in some limited places in healthcare to deliver improved quality at lower costs. Given the book's stated aim, it would have been helpful for there to have been greater reference to such approaches. In view of its somewhat eclectic mix of concepts and issues, this may also have given a clearer overall structure.

Nevertheless, Bryans has produced a useful introduction for clinicians who are new to the management of budgets. He has shown that there are no easy answers and has made clear that developing the skills of managing resources well – be they money, buildings, equipment or people – is critical to the delivery of good quality care for patients.

Upper Gastrointestinal Surgery

JOHN FIELDING, MICHAEL HALLISSEY

EXTENT P/H	396 p, hardback
PRICE/ISBN	£115.50 1852336072
PUBLISHER	Springer (Berlin), 2004
REVIEWER	Richard Hardwick
STAR RATING	**

This book attempts to cover all aspects of management for oesophageal, gastric, splenic and small bowel disease. The editors have amassed an excellent portfolio of contributors who have written the 27 chapters. The page layout is double column, which makes for easy reading, and black and white lined drawings are interspersed throughout the text. This style works well and helps to make the information readily accessible, encouraging one to dip in and out of the various chapters. There are questions at the end of each of these that provide a useful 'checking back' function, which helps readers confirm that they have picked up the main learning points from each contribution.

What I did not enjoy about this book was the organisation. It was novel to describe the anatomy and physiology of each organ in its own chapter and then discuss the benign diseases and malignant problems again in separate chapters. However, this resulted in considerable repetition. The spleen seems to have been given excessive prominence with over 20 pages devoted to the benign conditions of this organ whereas only 10 are given over to carcinoma of the oesophagus. There are some unusual chapters such as Chapter 23: 'High risk lesions in the oesophagus and nuclear medicine'. This goes into the most extra-ordinary detail of how radionuclide oesophageal transit studies are performed and interpreted. Unexpectedly, there is then no discussion about high-risk lesions of the oesophagus! This chapter is followed by the only colour illustration of the book, which consists of five pictures of radionuclide oesophageal gastric and motility studies.

I am not entirely sure who this book is aimed at but undergraduates and surgical trainees alike may find it useful to dip into for quick guidance. I think it would be most useful as a reference volume for some of its excellent chapters such as 'Stromal upper GI tract neoplasms' and 'Surgical resection of oesophageal cancer: role of extended lymphadenectomy'.

Frontiers in Colorectal Surgery

ROBIN PHILLIPS, SUE CLARK

EXTENT P/H	274 p, hardback
PRICE/ISBN	£40.00 1903378338
PUBLISHER	tfm (Shrewsbury), 2005
REVIEWER	John Hobbiss
STAR RATING	*****

This book provides an excellent summary of the state of the art of coloproctology and would be a most useful acquisition for anyone involved in colorectal practice. It is edited by two well-known, London-based coloproctologists and consists of 25 chapters covering all aspects of the specialty. The 41 named authors are mainly UK-based, with small contributions from Scandinavia and North America. The book has five parts: 'Frontiers in neoplasia', 'Frontiers in IBD', 'Frontiers around the anus', 'Frontiers in management' and 'Gender issues'. I turned immediately to the last section, intrigued to find out what gender issues in coloproctology were. (A debate on the construction of a colonic neovagina perhaps?) The section actually consists of two excellent chapters on fertility after pouch surgery and erectile dysfunction. 'Reproductive health' would have been a more accurate heading.

Each chapter is structured under the headings: 'What is the problem?', 'Where are we now?' and 'Where are we