most worrying that the book leaves us with the clear impression that a profession that should be most focused on the care of others has developed a culture in which the way that doctors treat their colleagues leaves so much room for improvement. There are serious concerns here about the nature of true professionalism because of the well-documented prevalence of interpersonal disputes, ineffective team-working, bullying and harassment.

Recent work by the General Medical Council, royal colleges, the National Clinical Assessment Service and deaneries has shown that the general levels of skill and understanding required by consultant surgeons, trainers and trusts are worryingly low. There are serious implications here for patient safety not only because of individual failure but because those failures put vulnerable patients at even greater risk.

Since the events at Bristol more than a decade ago, much has been learned about doctors' performance but much less about the causes and opportunities for improvement. Like other industries, about 6% of the work-force will show significant performance concerns in any one year but health professionals are particularly at risk because of the sensitivity of their work, the variety of problems they face and the poor standard of support in the NHS today.

Repeatedly, the key features of dysfunctional NHS practice are brought into focus. These include the illusion of independent practice and the inappropriate dependence on trainees to provide the service. We should be concerned that, after many years of training, surgical consultants often lack the skills to develop effective team-working and leadership.

Overall, therefore, the book raises more questions than it answers. Perhaps the most important of these is why so little of the effort that has been directed to exposing poor performance and its management has been redirected to improving the chaotic and arbitrary environment in which so many doctors have to work. This book is strong on symptoms. I hope that the next edition will also look at the underlying political and organisational causes and the opportunities for improvement.

Clinical Evaluation of Medical Devices: Principles and Case Studies (2nd edn)

KAREN BECKER, JOHN WHYTE

EXTENT P/H	360 p, hardback
PRICE/ISBN	£85.50 1588294226
PUBLISHER	Humana (New Jersey), 2005
REVIEWER	John Williams
STAR RATING	**

From the outset, it must be made clear that this book has been written entirely for the American market and hence deals with American legislation.

First published in 1997, rapid development of medical devices has stimulated the need for a second edition. Bearing in mind that the American legislation and workings of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are quite different from those encountered in the UK (where the responsible body is the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency), the contributors are all North American apart from one Norwegian.

Despite this, there are as always chapters that are worthy of note, some of which are particularly helpful. Chapter 1 deals entirely with clinical trials and having dealt with definition of a medical device then provides an important overview of considerations to be taken into account when organising an appropriate clinical trial. This is a helpful section with a lot of practical advice on the standards required and the sources of potential hazards and pitfalls. It looks to pre-market testing, clinical outcomes and the post-market surveillances while addressing the statutory requirements of the FDA.

The debate as to whether emerging technologies are covered by the medicines or the devices side of the Agency is addressed in a single chapter. This is not an unfamiliar situation and is becoming an increasingly pointed debate in the UK. As such, the role of the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence raised within this chapter does give some indication of the attempt to look internationally. The second part of the chapter largely covers cost, which is of no direct relevance to the UK situation.

Chapter 4 exposes the difference between the British and American systems, with the UK singularly focused on post-marketing surveillance. However, the reporting systems do appear to be markedly similar.

Chapter 5 is especially useful, looking at the statistics associated with the Bayesian method in clinical trials. This fundamental mathematical approach to clinical trials answers many of the difficulties associated with small trial numbers, particularly with multiple end-points.

The development of emerging technologies and the combination of drug/device combinations is examined in chapter 9. Many of the issues discussed, particularly the nature of principal action of the device, are looked at in detail. Systematic exposure to drugs from devices such as drug-eluting stents and the discussion on their toxicology (and hence their relevance as a device or a medicine) are illustrated. Chapter 10 is especially interesting and revealing as it discusses the issues of the production of new devices on the stock market: a sensitive area often overlooked.

Part 2 of the book deals with a series of clinical examples. As such it is particularly useful, covering many of the problems anyone involved in the development of medical devices will encounter, for example, the use of randomised controlled trials and how difficult it is to apply them to devices.

In summary, as with so many that have a specialised audience, this book does have value on an international basis. However, readers do need to be highly selective in what they take note of since so much of it is directly applicable to the FDA and the American process of achieving licence for the use of devices. It is useful as a reference book for those involved in the development of clinical trials but is of little value when applied to the UK regulatory system.

General Surgical Operations (5th edn)

RM KIRK

EXTENT P/H	733 p, hardback
PRICE/ISBN	£99.99 0443101213
PUBLISHER	Churchill Livingstone (London), 2006
REVIEWER	Cleo Oliver
STAR RATING	****

This is the fifth edition of a well-known and popular operative text. This edition has contributions from 53 authors, mainly consultants working in London teaching hospitals. However, there is also input from specialists around the world.

This text is not written with the aim of helping a student to pass an examination but to enable a surgeon to perform an operation when required. Thus, although it is useful for a trainee learning about the operations for the first time, it is also a very useful reference for a trained surgeon who is about to carry out an infrequently performed procedure perhaps in emergency conditions.

In this era of super-specialisation, it is nice to have a practical manual that covers all surgical specialties. There are chapters dealing with orthopaedics, plastics and even neurosurgery among others. The author accepts that these days in the British Isles, it is unlikely that a surgeon is called on to cover this broad range of operations but he suggests with the prospect of natural disasters, terrorist activities and war being a possibility, wherever you are in the world a surgeon should be equipped to cover any emergency. Having said this, it would be a particularly useful operative text for any surgeon working in the developing world, especially with a chapter on anaesthesia-related techniques clearly illustrating several regional blocks as well as tracheal intubation and ventilation of a patient.

This new edition is cheaper than the previous one. Nevertheless, despite having almost 200 fewer pages and removal of chapters on pre- and postoperative assessment, it uses colour to highlight the important points in each operation and is easier to read. It is printed on quality paper which appears durable enough to allow rapid access when this text is to be relied upon in an emergency.

The book is clearly illustrated with simple diagrams of the important anatomy involved in each operation. Nevertheless, these diagrams are relatively few in number and the explanation of each operation can be rather long. This may be an advantage as the text is laid out in an easy-to-read format with subheadings such as 'Appraise', 'Access', 'Assess', 'Action' and 'Complications'. These are the same for each operation with minimal cross referencing to avoid confusion. Most helpfully, the anatomical structures that must be avoided are clearly highlighted in a red 'key points' box along with the pitfalls that may be encountered and guidance on recognising, avoiding and managing complications or unexpected findings.

Despite providing information on such a broad range of operations, this text is still able to provide useful, up-to-date information necessary for a general surgical SpR working towards the intercollegiate specialty examination as it covers recent developments in each subspecialty and operations currently being evaluated, such as the endovascular aortic aneurism repair and issues in laparoscopic colorectal surgery. There are lists of suggested further reading at the end of each chapter as well as many references to the evidence base behind many of the procedures. The operations are described with the preference of the consultant surgeons writing them but there are comments about possible alternatives when relevant.

At only £99.99, this is a must for the bookshelf of every true general surgeon.

Intraoperative Neurophysiological Monitoring (2nd edn)

AAGE MØLLER

EXTENT P/H	368 p, hardback
PRICE/ISBN	£79.50 1588297039
PUBLISHER	Humana (New Jersey), 2005
REVIEWER	Charles West
STAR RATING	****

This book is an updated amalgamation of the first edition of the same name and the author's *Evoked Potentials in Intraoperative Monitoring*. It is a comprehensive and authoritative handbook that deals with the basic science and practical application of neurophysiological monitoring.

There are six sections. The first considers the general principles of intra-operative monitoring: the basis of monitoring, the various forms of electrical activity that can be recorded and practical aspects of recording evoked potentials from nerves, nuclei and muscles. There follows a section on sensory systems describing the relevant anatomy and physiology, monitoring of the auditory, somatosensory