BOOK REVIEWS

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Handbook of General Surgical Emergencies

SAM MEHTA, ANDREW HINDMARSH, LEILA REES

EXTENT P/H	280 pages, Paperback
PRICE/ISBN	£24.95, 1857757467
PUBLISHER	Radcliffe (Oxford), 2006
REVIEWER	Rory Molloy
STAR RATING	****

The authors state that the aim of this book is to provide a pocket-sized resource for medical students and professionals working in the accident and emergency department or in surgical admission units. The book is divided into 11 chapters, the first four dealing with general principles – how to break bad news, issues surrounding consent, *etc.* The following six chapters deal with commonly presenting emergencies based on systems. The final chapter covers important paediatric surgical emergencies.

The text is clear, succinct and mostly laid out in a manner that would make quick reference in an emergency easy to find and follow. As the authors state, it is not designed to be an exhaustive analysis of every presenting condition. Rather, it acts as an aide-memoire when faced with unfamiliar circumstances. It also provides a reminder of important first principles to follow and appropriate investigations to undertake in various scenarios.

I especially liked the sections dealing with generic skills such as communication with patients and relatives, consent and breaking bad news. These issues, while not strictly emergencies, are encountered almost on a daily basis and can be extremely challenging. The guidance provided should assist in ensuring that correct procedures are followed. References are provided to enable readers to consult the latest updates from the relevant authorities.

Criticism of this book could be directed at the omission of a section dealing with management of the compromised airway. While uncommon and usually dealt with by other specialities, all surgical trainees should have sound knowledge of how to deal with airway obstruction and how to secure an airway in an emergency. Another minor issue is the physical size of the book, which does not lend itself to be carried by the busy junior doctor, especially now that white coats have almost disappeared from the wards.

However, a brief summary of the diagnosis, investigation and management of common surgical emergencies is presented. The information is not exhaustive but the brevity ensures that important points should not be overlooked. This will be of great benefit to junior doctors coping with emergencies early in their career. Medical students who are increasingly faced with large volumes of information to assimilate will also welcome this practical and to-the-point blueprint. It assumes a basic knowledge and does not purport to replace standard

textbooks. As such, it will find a useful place in the armamentarium of medical students revising for examinations. Busy junior doctors will also welcome the clear and concise layout.

The Evolution of Surgical Instruments

JOHN KIRKUP

EXTENT P/H	507 pages, Hardback
PRICE/ISBN	US\$275.00, 0930405862
PUBLISHER	Norman Publishing (California), 2006
REVIEWER	Barry Jackson
STAR RATING	*****

It is rare to find a neglected subject in the history of medicine. Almost every aspect has been subject to repeated detailed scrutiny and recording by amateur historians and professionals alike, resulting in a plethora of articles, monographs and books. Although individual types of surgical instruments have occasionally been the subject of historical research and publication, this magisterial book is the first to give a detailed overview of the entire history of surgical instrumentation. In the English literature, only one book has previously attempted this. In 1942, CJS Thompson, then curator at The Royal College of Surgeons of England, published a short history of surgical instruments in a pocket-sized book of only 115 pages, many of which were taken up by illustrations. It was inevitably superficial. Now, his successor as curator of surgical instruments at the College, John Kirkup, a retired orthopaedic surgeon, has produced what must surely be the definitive work on the subject. It is difficult to believe that it will ever be surpassed.

The work is in four parts. Part 1 gives a general introduction but is largely taken up with a description of the sources used in compiling the information to follow. These include not only a very large number of historical articles and books on surgery but also a study of surgical instrument makers' catalogues over the past 200 years and, not surprisingly, the very large collection of instruments owned by the College as well as collections in other museums in Europe and the US.

Part 2 comprises nearly 100 pages describing the different metals and other materials that have been used to make instruments over the centuries. These include animal parts such as bone and ivory, plants, stones, minerals, rubber, plastic, gum elastic as well as no less than 13 different non-ferrous metals and six ferrous metals.

Part 3 is the perhaps the core of the book and is titled 'Structure and Form'. It has ten chapters dealing in great detail with the evolution of different classes of instrument. Probes, needles, blades, forceps, retractors, scissors, catheters, haemostats, dilators and their various allies as well as implants and prostheses, diagnostic and therapeutic instruments – the list goes on. Each chapter comprises a historical introduction

followed by an analysis of structure and then of function. Some of this material has been published previously in the *Annals* and formed the substance of the author's MD thesis.

Part 4 is on applied instrumentation and, for example, deals with haemorrhage, wound closure, extraction of foreign materials and amputation. This section contains much of general surgical interest and for the occasional reader may be of greater interest than some of the more specialised earlier chapters.

The book is lavishly illustrated throughout with more than 500 black-and-white line drawings and photographs. There is also a central section of 30 colour plates showing boxed collections of 19th-century instruments and plates from illustrated surgical manuscripts and books of the past. Each chapter is extensively referenced. To conclude, there is a comprehensive bibliography and a useful appendix detailing museums and collections throughout the world that exhibit surgical instruments.

Are there any criticisms? I could find only one error during a detailed reading and that relates to an illustration rather than the text! Plate III is incorrectly labelled. Beyond this I found some of the illustrations disappointingly small given the detail they contain and a few have reproduced poorly.

Overall, however, I believe this to be a unique reference volume that will be consulted for many years to come by those who wish to understand how the developing craft of surgery necessitated developments in instrument design and, conversely, how serial advances in materials technology allowed developments to take place in the craft of surgery. It will also be of special interest to instrument collectors and medical historians.

Recent Advances in Surgery 29

COLIN JOHNSON, IRVING TAYLOR

EXTENT P/H	240 pages, Paperback
PRICE/ISBN	£35.00, 1853156922
PUBLISHER	RSM (London), 2006
REVIEWER	Dominic Slade
STAR RATING	****

Recent Advances in Surgery is a well-established series from the Royal Society of Medicine Press, masterfully edited by Colin Johnson and Irving Taylor. It is updated annually and attempts to review trends in current practice and advances within the surgical specialties. In recent years, it has adopted a standard format with sections of one to five chapters devoted to the generality of surgery. In this edition, there are sections for surgery in general, liver and pancreatic surgery, vascular surgery, breast disease and a final chapter that summarises the leading randomised clinical trials from the preceding year. Every chapter contains boxes highlighting key points for clinical practice, which are summarised neatly before the reference section.

This year's offering has an especially diverse range of topics drawn from 34 separate authors comprising renowned experts in their field, practising consultant surgeons, registrars and SHOs. The book contains largely black-and-white illustrations although the chapter on gynaecomastia has a number of colour plates within it. There are a considerable number of pertinent radiographic images as well as a few line drawings.

Within the section on general surgery there is a review of paediatric surgery in the district general hospital. This serves as both a concise summary of the commonly encountered conditions as well as a guide to the management of children outside a specialist centre. There follows an excellent update on pre-operative cardiac assessment and optimisation, an in-depth review of angiogenesis and its relevance to neoplasia and a concise summary of sickle cell disease as it relates to surgical practice. Superb updates are provided in the chapters on fast-track surgery, radiofrequency and thermal ablation of tumours and live-donor liver transplantation. I particularly enjoyed the sections on pancreatic, liver and splenic trauma clearly written by surgeons with a life-time's experience in the field. I also found the review of severe acute pancreatitis superbly structured, reasoned and crisply written.

New technologies in vascular surgery are explored including the minimally invasive management of pseudo-aneurysms and endovenous laser therapy. As always, the randomised clinical trials section brings one up to date with studies that may influence general surgical practice and makes an excellent starting point for further reading.

The *Recent Advances* series has always been championed as excellent revision material for surgical examinations and this particular volume covers a very diverse field indeed within which every potential candidate should find sections of relevance. For those wishing to broaden their understanding and to be brought up to date with key advances in surgery in general, this book is for them.

Churchill's Pocketbook of Surgery (3rd edn)

ANDREW RAFTERY, MICHAEL DELBRIDGE

EXTENT P/H	632 pages, Paperback
PRICE/ISBN	£19.99, 0443102740
PUBLISHER	Churchill Livingstone (London), 2006
REVIEWER	John Winstanley
STAR RATING	****

This is the third edition of what has in the past proved a popular book as evidenced by the publisher's commercial confidence in going to a further edition. The authors' aim as stated in the preface is to produce a concise, didactic account of the common surgical disorders that is both affordable and fits in the pocket, although not many