BOOK REVIEWS

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Reconstructive Microsurgery: A New Conception

DOINA DUMITRESCU-IONESCU

EXTENT P/H	352 pages, Paperback
PRICE/ISBN	\$26.99, 1419630520
PUBLISHER	Booksurge (Charleston, SC), 2007
REVIEWER	David Soutar
STAR RATING	***

This is a refreshingly original and unusual text. It is a testament to the life work of the author and her struggle to develop clinical microsurgery in Romania. It takes the reader on a journey starting with learning the basic techniques of microsurgery, laboratory and experimental research, teaching and training. It then progresses to the building of an infrastructure for development and clinical practice, the maintenance of meticulous records and the evaluation of results. As such, the book is a very personal account written in an informal style so that the reader can follow the author's own development and experience.

The format is unusual beginning with the author's philosophy for developing reconstructive microsurgery. It then covers personal techniques developed for peripheral nerve repair and microvascular anastomosis. It is clear from early on in this book that the author's main interest lies in the management of peripheral nerves, particularly in limbs. There is a section on reconstructive microsurgery of the brachial plexus following trauma and a section on limb replantation. There is a 20-page section of tabulated information on individual patients showing the type of detailed records that Dr Ionescu maintained.

One of the most interesting chapters of the book is entitled 'Evaluation of Results According to Reconstruction Objective Groups'. This section, which is over 100 pages in length, includes a series of individual cases posing different clinical problems. It demonstrates the author's philosophy and strategies of treatment planning and shows the results obtained. The numerous illustrations are also unusual as they are in very small format often requiring a magnifying glass to obtain the best results. Much of this section again is concerned with peripheral nerve repair and the results that can be achieved.

The final section of the book headed 'Conclusions' lets the reader share the wealth of experience based on over 7500 peripheral nerve repairs and a wide variety of other microsurgical procedures. This, again, is very personal and one can visualise Dr Ionescu teaching younger colleagues and letting them benefit from this wide experience.

The reference section is over 40 pages in length and is not set out in any particular order. This again demonstrates to the reader the author's struggle to learn and develop the necessary

skills to provide a first-class clinical service. There is, unfortunately, no cross-referencing in the text, which includes articles, reviews and text books that were clearly influential in the development of this particular surgeon.

This book is a tribute to a pioneering surgeon working in a difficult environment at a difficult time. It demonstrates how Dr Ionescu overcame these difficulties and developed an international clinical service. It is not the type of book that surgeons might take up and read or use as a reference text. It is certainly a book that those who know this particular surgeon will enjoy reading. The conclusion section and some of the clinical cases that identify her thought processes and her experience are certainly worth reading and could prove very helpful to surgeons both young and old.

The Evidence for Vascular Surgery, 2nd edn

JONOTHAN J EARNSHAW, JOHN A MURIE

EXTENT P/H	270 pages, Hardback
PRICE/ISBN	£59.95, 1903378451
PUBLISHER	tfm (Shrewsbury), 2007
REVIEWER	James Barnard, Madu Onwudike
STAR RATING	****

This textbook offers the reader a comprehensible and well-illustrated journey through the evidence available for the management of all of the most commonly encountered vascular patient conditions. From vascular consultants, trainees and nurse specialists to stroke specialists, cardiologists, anaesthetists and diabetologists this book offers easily accessible review material of issues that are faced every day in the management of vascular disease. The second edition has come a long way from the original with the addition of several new chapters, which include the designation of accepted grading of evidence levels and recommendations for clinical practice.

Each chapter topic has been the product of a systematic review of the literature performed by designated members of the Joint Vascular Research Group. The chapters follow a traditional format of introduction and background, and give a discussion of the literature sometimes tabulating the salient studies with their evidence grades and ending with recommendations for clinical practice.

Interestingly, there is a conflict between chapters covering arterial and venous topics as to whether they reference National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines. NICE guidance and systematic reviews are not referred to in chapters covering carotid artery stent placement, abdominal aortic aneurysm stent placement or stent graft replacement in the thoracic aortic aneurysm. NICE guidance and systematic review work is, however, acknowl-

edged and described briefly in the chapter covering new interventions for varicose veins. Nonetheless, the brevity of the reference may leave the reader having to look up the guidelines to be fully in the picture. We also note that, unusually for a comprehensive 270-page text, there is no index. This is one thing that has not changed since the first edition.

Taken as a whole, the authors are to be congratulated on the very readable text with superb colour illustrations and photographs that are featured throughout every chapter. In this respect, the book is certainly ahead of others with which it might compete and with its new more sophisticated presentation we welcome its arrival.

General Surgery, 11th edn

HAROLD ELLIS, SIR ROY CALNE, CHRISTOPHER WATSON

EXTENT P/H	408 pages, Paperback
PRICE/ISBN	£18.99, 1405139110
PUBLISHER	Blackwell (London), 2006
REVIEWER	Andrew Evans
STAR RATING	****

'The ideal medical student at the end of the clinical course will have written his or her own textbook.' I was very glad to see this most useful piece of advice still standing on the very first line of the introduction of this book. It is almost a challenge to put it back on the shelf and get on with the suggested task. But no, the book is still worth reading.

In a world of problem-based learning, the student is supposed to bring together facts on a need-to-know basis. Although this has its strengths, the building of an understanding can only occur within a framework. An awareness of that framework is vital and this book by virtue of its structure is the best climbing frame available. It provides the scaffolding from within which a student may safely forage. It is true that there are no opportunities to draw out the similarities between, say, appendicitis, cholecystitis and diverticulitis but such things are provided by other texts.

The font, font size, use of colour (this edition introduces blue), diagrams and tables are well chosen. They serve to communicate without taking undue attention. There is a large, good-quality index. The unnecessary photographs previously at the start of each chapter have been removed.

Famous statues come, in time, to be covered with bird droppings. Well-established texts may have a similar fate because editorial process quite rightly begins by making small tweaks and additions. Eventually sentences begin to sag beneath these accretions and a time arrives when a fresh perspective is needed.

The section dealing with the treatment of cholecystitis may have reached such a point. For example, the sentence 'elective cholecystectomy is commonly performed about 6

weeks later because of the undoubted danger of further attacks' now suffers the appendage 'although early urgent cholecystectomy during the first 72 hours of admission offers an excellent alternative to the patient optimising recovery and minimising the disruption of their normal lifestyle'. This no longer reads well; more importantly, I think the naive student would come away from this chapter without a good understanding of the relationship between cholecystectomy, stones in the duct, ERCP and MRCP. The topic of pseudo-obstruction remains poorly covered. For example, the last page of the paralytic ileus chapter is almost empty and could be filled to good effect with some text to cover this not uncommon clinical problem.

These are, however, relatively small points as the book is still the best general surgical textbook for medical students. The coverage is wide, the writing is usually clear, there are few omissions and it is not too long or too heavy even though it has grown slightly.

Operative Pediatric Surgery, 6th edn

LEWIS SPITZ, ARNOLD CORAN

EXTENT P/H	136 pages, Hardback
PRICE/ISBN	£250.00, 9780340813409
PUBLISHER	Hodder Arnold (London), 2006
REVIEWER	Shailinder Singh, Leela Kapila
STAR RATING	****

The previous (fifth) edition of this book was published in 1995 and since then there have been several major advances in various fields of paediatric surgery. This timely edition includes several new chapters such as minimally invasive surgery for conditions in the chest and abdomen, including the ergonomics of laparoscopic surgery. Other new topics covered are the Nuss operation for pectus deformities of the chest, laparoscopic fundoplication, Heller's cardiomyotomy, pull-through procedures in the neonate, interventional radiology, the principles of bariatric, maternal-fetal surgery and conjoined twins.

The format of the book, which is formal, is similar to the previous editions, with each chapter commencing with a brief history of the condition, indications for surgery, position for surgery, incision, the operative procedure and alternatives when indicated, postoperative care, complications together with a very useful list of further reading. The medical artists have improved the effective, simple black-and-white line drawings and few radiographs. The layout of the book is uncomplicated and the text both easy to read and comprehend. The hardback black binding with its only coloured diagram on the cover gives the book an elegant appearance.

The authority of this book is enhanced and established by the inclusion of several new authors contributing in their field