

Book Reviews Critiques de livres

BEATING HEART CORONARY ARTERY SURGERY. Edited by Tomas A. Salerno, Marco Ricci, Hratch L. Karamanoukian, Giuseppe d'Ancona and Jacob Bergsland. 278 pp. illust. Futura Publishing Company Inc., Armonk, NY. 2001. \$US75. ISBN 0-87993-473-5

Until recently, beating heart coronary artery surgery was a historical footnote on the path to coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG) utilizing cardiopulmonary bypass. The technical difficulties of beating heart surgery were daunting. They included preserving hemodynamics while displacing the heart for exposure and controlling vessels without causing significant ischemia during construction of anastomoses. The relative ease, reliability and reproducibility of CABG using cardiopulmonary bypass and cardioplegia relegated beating heart techniques to the fringe of clinical practice in the developed world.

CABG became a common operation as its benefits became apparent, but cardiopulmonary bypass equipment costs limited its use in less developed economies. This provided the impetus for master surgeons in these countries to develop innovative techniques that did not rely on expensive disposable equipment. Unfortunately other surgeons were unable to reproduce their results.

Meanwhile, the success of standard CABG, coupled with the accomplishments of percutaneous coronary interventions resulted in the referral for operation of patients with increasingly serious comorbid conditions. The damaging consequences of cardiopulmonary bypass became more manifest in these higher risk patients, and methods were sought to lessen the harm.

Widespread re-emergence of beating heart CABG has resulted from the confluence of these trends.

In this book, Salerno and his colleagues have assembled an impressive list of contributors who constitute a veritable who's who of international cardiac surgery. A number of chapters outline the progression of technical innovations that have allowed off-pump surgery to assume a practical place in mainstream clinical practice. These innovations include methods of exposure, stabilization, control of the coronary vessels, maintenance of hemodynamics and avoidance of significant ischemia. Patient selection is discussed, including which types of patients may benefit most from this approach. Alternative approaches to median sternotomy are presented. There is some interesting discussion of the promising but unproven technique of intraoperative assessment of graft patency and a good chapter on neurologic outcomes after cardiac surgery. Although some comparison is made of off-pump surgery versus more conventional techniques, this is of a retrospective nature among very dissimilar groups. It is certainly not a rigorous scientific demonstration of benefit in favour of the new approaches. To be fair, this issue is only beginning to be explored in the surgical literature.

This volume suffers because of considerable repetition through its 22 chapters. Kolessov's pioneering efforts in off-pump surgery are described no less than 5 times. Topics such as the "single-suture" technique to displace the heart for enhanced exposure and "hybrid" or "integrated" revascularization procedures (combined surgery and angioplasty) appear in multiple locations. In addition, the illustrations and plates are often out of focus or indecipherable.

As a how-to volume this book has considerable merit and will be of value to surgeons who have an interest in beating heart surgery, but as a

scientific treatment of the subject it is considerably less successful.

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A SURGEON'S GUIDE TO WRITING AND PUBLISHING. Edited by M. Schein, J.R. Farndon and A. Fingerhut. 288 pp. tfm Publishing Ltd., Shifnal, Shropshire, UK. 2001. £21.50. ISBN 1-903378-01-X

While recognizing that not all "good" ideas in surgery are publishable, the authors of this book provide good advice for surgeons who wish to enhance their careers and enlarge knowledge in surgery. Of the 37 authors, 17 are from the United Kingdom and 12 from the United States.

This "how to" book targeted at young authors will also be helpful for mature readers because of the up-to-date information on Internet communication and electronic publishing, guidelines on meta-analyses and parallel-group randomized trials. There is much insight into what a journal editor wants or expects from authors and some of the political aspects of surgical publishing. The remarks addressed to "foreign" authors might be interpreted by some as patronizing. Eleven of the 288 pages are devoted to essential statistics and the effective presentation of data.

In addition to its appeal to aspiring authors, this is an essential read for editors, reviewers and, indeed, critical readers of current surgical literature.

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