

Book Reviews

Critiques de livres

THE COMPLETE SPLEEN: STRUCTURE, FUNCTION, AND CLINICAL DISORDERS. 2nd ed. Edited by Anthony J. Bowdler. 328 pp. Humana Press, Totowa, NJ. 2001. \$US195. ISBN 0-89603-555-7

Despite the ambitious title of this book, the editor has brilliantly delivered what he promised, and in a mere 300 pages. The topic is indeed covered comprehensively and concisely. As the subtitle states the initial chapters deal with basic science, including a detailed account of the anatomic, histologic, physiologic and immunologic aspects of the spleen.

In a section that covers areas at the crossroads between pathophysiology and clinical medicine, abnormal biologic characteristics and behaviour of a disordered spleen are described. I found the interactions between the diseased spleen and both the circulating blood cells and blood volume fascinating (even for a surgeon!). The section devoted to clinical medicine would be of interest to immunologists, hematologists and oncologists. Finally, the surgical aspects, including the so-called "medical" indications for splenectomy, trauma and surgical techniques, are discussed.

The layout is logical but simple. There is an adequate number of good quality black-and-white photographs that reproduce macroscopic anatomy specimens, histologic slides or radiologic images. These are supplemented by a small number of excellent colour plates. The text is also enhanced by easy-to-read tables and clear diagrams. Reference lists are extensive and recent.

Of what use is this book? Certainly, the surgical chapter is up-to-date and provides adequate coverage of the role of laparoscopy as well as the modern conservative management of splenic injuries. However, in my opinion the chapters on hyposplenism and the relationship of the spleen to infection are even more im-

portant to surgeons because the information contained in these 2 chapters is readily glossed over in standard surgical textbooks. Given the current debate on the conservative management of splenic trauma in the adult, the latest data on the actual dangers of the asplenic state are put in perspective in a balanced fashion, and clear recommendations for prophylaxis are presented.

This is an excellent reference text with something for everyone; even if it targets medical subspecialists, surgeons would greatly benefit from borrowing this volume from their libraries.

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MANAGEMENT OF COMPLEX CARDIOVASCULAR PROBLEMS. THE CONSULTANT'S APPROACH. 2nd edition. Edited by Thach N. Nguyen, Dayi Hu, Shigeru Saito, Vijay Dave and Cindy L. Grines with a foreword by Eugene Braunwald. 409 pp. Illust. Futura Publishing Company, Inc., Armonk, NY. 2002. Soft cover. \$US54. ISBN 0-87993-493-X

In this book many of the significant clinical issues that cardiologists encounter on a day-to-day basis are discussed. Although the chapters are relatively small, the topics are discussed in very elaborate detail and include the most recent advances in therapy and research. The majority of the pertinent points are referenced. The book is refreshing in that it discusses various patient subgroups in relation to clinical problems, i.e., diabetic patients and the elderly. It also discusses gender issues. The various tables and graphs throughout the text are easy to understand and further illustrate the pertinent points.

The topic areas include common problems such as atrial fibrillation, acute coronary syndromes, arrhythmias, congestive heart failure and syncope. In addition, less common but no less important clinical scenarios are covered, such as cardiogenic shock, thrombolysis for acute stroke and congenital heart disease in adults.

The chapter on acute coronary syndromes includes the pathophysiology of unstable coronary syndromes. It gives a thorough review of the mechanisms involved, and it provides a meticulous dissection of the literature, a large part of which is recent. The authors have made an extremely complex topic area appear understandable. The chapter on management of ST elevation acute myocardial infarction once again is a superb summary of all the relevant trials and treatment modalities available.

A disappointment was the chapter on hypotension and cardiogenic shock in acute myocardial infarction, in which mechanisms of shock were discussed, but very little was mentioned of one of the most important treatment modalities — the intra-aortic balloon pump and its potential mechanisms of benefit. As well, a more-detailed discussion of the SHOCK trial would have been beneficial.

There are other minor faults such as the discussion of bretylium for arrhythmias, which has fallen into disuse, the odd table that is impossible to understand (e.g., in the chapter on hypertension the legend is uninterpretable), the notable absence of important topic areas in valvular heart disease, such as mitral stenosis and aortic stenosis, and the omission of certain classes of drugs for hypertension and congestive heart failure that appear promising (i.e., vasopeptidase inhibitors).

Despite these shortcomings this text provides a very good overview of the practice of modern-day cardiology and its associated area, the investigation and therapy for peripheral

vascular disease and cerebrovascular disease, and illustrates ongoing research that may change the practice of cardiology in the future.

Overall, this text is extremely thorough and contains areas of interest for the novice cardiology trainee as well as for the consultant cardiologist. This book would also be of interest to those in the surgical field in the daily management of acute cardiac medical problems that are of relevance to their practice.

In summary, this book is topical, interesting and comprehensive, and provides quality reading for all those associated with the cardiovascular field.

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RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY OF THE ESOPHAGUS. Mark K. Ferguson. 344 pp. Illust. Futura Publishing, Co., Armonk, NY. 2001. US\$105. ISBN 0-87993-494-8

The objective of this book is to look at the specific issues around the care and management of patients requiring esophageal reconstruction.

It is the author's intent to give a more thorough and detailed review of esophageal reconstructive surgery than is offered in the standard textbooks of esophageal surgery published to date. Recognition of difficulties that can occur when performing esophageal surgery highlights the need for such a book.

The introduction outlines historical aspects of esophageal surgery, an approach I find it helpful since it allows the reader to fully appreciate the innovations and changes that have occurred to help bring about a more practical and safe approach to esophageal surgery.

Given the complexities of reoperative esophageal surgery and the myriad of possibilities for replacing the esophagus, this textbook is mainly directed to practising thoracic surgeons and to general surgeons with a strong interest in esophageal disease. In this regard the book is highly readable and easy to follow. The text covers the techniques of esophageal reconstruction, including preservation techniques as well as the care and management of postoperative complications. It is a well laid-out book and can be read quickly. The author uses simple pictures to demonstrate operative techniques. For the most part, these adequately illustrate the point, although, some-

times they are a bit too simplistic. For a book that is trying to be a comprehensive reference text, more detailed illustration of operative techniques is required.

Although the author tries to be as scientific as possible in regard to recommendations, there are many instances in esophageal surgery where there are no large published series on which to base decision-making. Certainly, randomized clinical trials are a shortcoming in this discipline. The author has extensive experience and exposure to the works of other skilled surgeons, and his personal preference of operative technique and management would have been valuable.

One area of weakness is that of laparoscopic, thoracoscopic approaches to esophageal surgery. Some references are made to this evolving technique, but for the most part it is omitted from the book.

I enjoyed many aspects of this book, especially those involving benign esophageal disease. I think it should complement the library of any practising thoracic surgeon and serve as a useful reference text in the libraries of surgical training centres.

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