
Book Reviews

Critiques de livres

EMERGENCY SURGERY AND CRITICAL CARE.

Edited by Simon Paterson-Brown. A Companion to Specialist Surgical Practice. Series Editors: Sir David C. Carter, O. James Garden and Simon Paterson-Brown. 321 pp. Illust. W.B. Saunders Company, Ltd., London, UK; Harcourt Brace & Co. Canada, Ltd., Toronto. 1997. Can\$104. ISBN 0-7216-2140-7

The target audience for this book is the community general surgeon who must provide coverage of the emergency department and the intensive care unit 24 hours a day. As such it attempts to cover a broad spectrum of surgical pathology.

Written by a variety of authors from the United Kingdom, the book is divided into 11 chapters covering common perioperative problems.

The topics that I found most interesting were those dealing with patient management issues in reasonably useful detail. In particular the review by S.D. Heys and colleagues on surgical nutrition was valuable. This chapter discusses in physiologic terms essential nutrients, vitamins and minerals, and enteral versus parenteral nutrition. In addition, the discussion includes useful guidelines on how to make adjustments depending on the patient's illness and provides many charts to make the material more presentable.

Another well-written chapter is the one on the management of upper gastrointestinal bleeding. This includes invasive and noninvasive management and will be valuable to the surgeon not familiar with many of the endoscopic diagnostic and therapeutic techniques currently available.

Other chapters on the management of common operative emergencies make up about two-thirds of the book. They include chapters on the large bowel, small bowel, pancreatobiliary emergencies and abdominal trauma. Unfortunately these are very

broad topics and to deal with them in a single text that is to be read by a practising general surgeon requires more depth than this text provides. In my opinion, it would have been better to cover only a subset of these topics but in much greater detail. It is unlikely that a practising surgeon would need help in diagnosing and managing cases of cholecystitis or appendicitis. As an example, the chapter on abdominal trauma could have dealt with more issues involved in ATLS and provided a more detailed discussion of individual organ injuries.

The weakest chapters are those dealing with perioperative critical care. The discussions on fluids and electrolytes, deep venous thrombosis, pulmonary and renal support, for example, are so superficial that they provide no help other than to point out the deficiencies in the reader's knowledge base and to provide direction for further reading. There are several controversial statements that may prove problematic, such as the recommendation to avoid a Pringle manoeuvre longer than 30 minutes, which is disputed by many authorities. The discussion on deep venous thrombosis was too short in a text dealing with critical care and could have been reviewed more thoroughly. In the section on low-molecular-weight heparins, the *Lancet* article used as a reference was misquoted; a discussion of low-molecular-weight heparins in orthopedic and trauma patients would have been useful.

In summary, this book contains several chapters that are worth reading, but a large part of the book deals with the issues at a too-superficial level. Therefore, I would only recommend this book to a community surgeon who needs a brief overview to point to areas that may require further reading elsewhere.

Robert Salasidis, MD

Assistant Professor
Division of General Surgery and Critical Care
Montreal General Hospital
McGill University
Montreal, Que.

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ESSENTIALS OF ORTHOPAEDIC SURGERY.

2nd edition. Sam W. Wiesel and John N. Delahay. 344 pp. Illust. W.B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia; Harcourt Brace & Co. Canada, Ltd., Toronto. 1997. Can\$49.95. ISBN 0-7216-6671-X

This book is written expressly for the medical student. It is multi-authored, but the chapters are well coordinated with little overlap. There are 14 chapters, the first 7 of which are general in nature. The latter 7 chapters deal with specific areas such as the spine, shoulder, foot and ankle. The book is well laid out and lavishly illustrated. The authors are to be congratulated for their innovative use of algorithms for diagnosis and treatment. This allows the medical student to see at a glance what the likely diagnosis is and how to treat the condition.

The authors are also to be commended for cautioning the use of imaging studies. They indicate that, with respect to the back, CT scans and MR images are abnormal in 30% of totally asymptomatic patients and that if surgery is based only on scans, there is a 30% chance that the patient will be subjected to an unnecessary, unsuccessful operation. It is good to see this clearly and forcefully stated. Also, the authors rightly debunk several widely used procedures, such as trigger point injections and epidural injection of steroids.

I found this book enjoyable reading and I recommend it as an excel-

lent addition to any medical student's library. Indeed, many general practitioners will find this book of value, particularly in its discussions of investigative techniques and reasonable treatments.

Hugh U. Cameron, MD

Suite 318
43 Wellesley St. E
Toronto, Ont.

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REVIEW OF SURGERY. 2nd edition. David C. Sabiston, Jr. 268 pp. W.B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia; Harcourt Brace & Co. Canada, Ltd., Toronto. 1997. Can\$50.95. ISBN 0-7216-8671-0

This review is intended to supplement *Sabiston's Textbook of Surgery. The Biological Basis of Modern Surgical Practice* (15th edition) and is divided into subject areas roughly corresponding to the chapters in the textbook. The review comprises a series of multiple-choice questions. Each one is followed by a different number of choices (usually 3 to 5), and 1 or more may be correct. This format differs from that of most examinations and greater consistency in the structure of the questions and number of correct answers would have improved it.

The multiple choices are followed by a brief explanation and the correct answer(s). To reproduce the examination environment, these explanations would have been better placed at the back of the book.

Having a review book to supplement a textbook is useful, particularly to those preparing for an examination, such as medical students, residents and practising surgeons preparing for recertification. The discussions are generally clear and are supported by

reference to the page(s) in the textbook where the material can be reviewed.

Gerald M. Fried, MD

Professor of Surgery
McGill University
Montreal, Que.

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TEXTBOOK OF SURGERY. THE BIOLOGICAL BASIS OF MODERN SURGICAL PRACTICE.

15th edition. David C. Sabiston, Jr. and H. Kim Lyster. 2318 pp. Illust. W.B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia; Harcourt Brace & Co. Canada, Ltd., Toronto. 1997. Can\$160. ISBN 0-7216-5887-3

This is the latest reincarnation of one of the standard surgical texts. It is a comprehensive textbook of surgery and a substantial update to the 14th edition published in 1992.

Like many surgical textbooks it is divided into sections on the physiologic basis for the management of surgical problems, followed by chapters detailing surgical problems organized around organ systems. Since the previous edition, 6 chapters have been added, encompassing molecular biology, clinical outcomes, laparoscopy, plastic and maxillofacial surgery, surgical management of pulmonary emphysema, and mesothelioma. The first 3 of these new chapters deserve special mention. The chapter on molecular biology succinctly reviews the basic concepts and research tools used in this rapidly growing field. Furthermore, the authors cover clinical applications for diagnosis and therapy that are of interest to surgeons. It is important for all surgeons to be conversant with molecular biology and its relevance to clinical surgery, and this chapter succeeds well in that regard.

The excellent chapter on clinical outcomes in surgery is mandatory reading for all surgeons. It introduces and defines the important vocabulary and provides a detailed review of the variety of research approaches, including clinical examples related to surgery. It is well written, illustrating its points clearly with examples from the surgical literature. After reading this chapter the reader will be better able to assess the data presented in the surgical literature. The chapter also emphasizes the need for surgeons to look at nontraditional measures of outcome, such as quality of life and the economic impact of surgical care.

The section on laparoscopy provides basic information on the tools needed and covers in detail the physiologic effects of laparoscopic compared with traditional open surgery. Complications of the laparoscopic approach are covered briefly, but extensive references have been provided. The authors summarize the currently practised laparoscopic procedures that have not yet been accepted as standard care.

The other chapters have been substantially revised and updated. Many are followed not only by numerous references but by a list of suggested readings and a brief description of the significance of these. The text is supplemented with a large number of clear line drawings and black-and-white photographs.

Sabiston has attracted a group of well-known experts to write the chapters, and most of the book is written with the authority of someone who is knowledgeable and experienced in the field. At times, as in the chapter on breast diseases, many treatment alternatives are covered without a clear synthesis and adequate interpretation of the information. This may confuse the less experienced reader, such as a medical student or a junior resident.

Overall, this is an excellent refer-