

Book Reviews

Critiques de livres

VARICOSE VEINS. Harold Ellis and Peter Taylor. 122 pp. Illust. Greenwich Medical Media, London, UK; Oxford University Press Canada, Toronto. 1999. Can\$28.95. ISBN 1-900151-677

This book is written specifically for patients who are looking for more information about venous varicosities. The authors, 2 experienced vascular surgeons, succeed in their stated goal of "correcting misconceptions about varicose veins and helping the patient help the doctor in treatment."

Each of the 10 chapters begins with a summary of several sentences. Tables and short lists are used extensively to summarize the information. Photographs and diagrams are also used widely. This user-friendly mode of organization makes the book easy to read in one sitting.

The first few chapters attempt to put the problem of venous insufficiency in perspective and give the reader a working knowledge of venous anatomy and physiology. The anatomy and physiology section is reasonably extensive and would probably be skimmed over by the average patient. The chapter on investigations describes in detail the use of duplex scanning. Again the average patient would quickly find this section more than adequate in its detail.

Several chapters discuss the conservative management of varicosities and venous stasis ulcers. This is indicative of the overall slant of the book, which favours nonoperative management. There is a reasonable discussion of sclerotherapy and a shorter description of saphenous vein stripping and vein excisions. Deep venous surgery is mentioned in passing. The discussion of venous surgery also includes a section entitled "Your stay in hospital." Written for the British patient, this section is less applicable in the Canadian setting.

The book ends with an excellent 7-page chapter in question-and-answer format that provides a good summary of the information for those patients who are not interested in reading the entire book.

This text provides a good overview of venous diseases for the patient. I would certainly recommend it for those motivated patients who want more information. However, it is probably too extensive for the average patient. For these patients I would recommend the final chapter of questions and answers as a very useful patient-oriented summary of venous disease.

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YEARBOOK OF SURGERY 1998. Editor-in-Chief: Edward M. Copeland III. 533 pp. Illust. Mosby Inc., St. Louis; Harcourt Brace & Co. Canada, Ltd., Toronto. 1998. Can\$111. ISBN 0-8151-9743-8

"I used to!" This was the common response to my informal poll of a number of surgical colleagues whom I questioned as to whether they get and read the Yearbook series. This series has been in existence since 1901, and each title clearly states its purpose and intent. Currently, 40 yearbooks are published annually, 9 of them on surgical topics, including vascular, thoracic and plastic surgery and surgical oncology.

The *Yearbook of Surgery 1998* covers 14 surgical and surgically related topics, ranging from critical care and burns to noncardiac thoracic surgery. The editor-in-chief and 13 other editors, all US surgeons, have been provided with the mandate of reviewing 86 selected surgical journals published in 1998 and of selecting from these journals abstracts that they believe will be of particular interest to surgeons.

Each chapter begins with over a page of editorial comment and general overview, followed by the abstract, with about half a page devoted to comment

on the worth of the paper. In my area of oncology, the chapter was well divided into 12 papers on the breast, 9 papers on colorectal cancer, 4 on liver cancer, 2 on pancreatic cancer, 3 on stomach cancer, 3 on melanoma and 1 on sarcoma. Most of these papers I had seen or read during the year in the original journal. However, I wonder how many practising Canadian surgeons will be interested in the 18 or so critical care articles highlighted. Certainly 4 caught my attention, including a paper on ventilating the severely compromised patient for periods in the prone position. However, the ventilatory performance of baboons did seem somewhat esoteric to me!

I believe there are a number of strategies that the publisher and editors could adopt to make this classic series once again a "must have." First, I would recognize that general surgery is a specialty in its own right and that the chapters need a clear general surgical focus. For example, there should be chapters devoted to laparoscopic surgery, trauma, head and neck surgery and endocrine surgery. A single additional chapter should cover key papers on critical care, surgical nutrition and transplantation that the general surgeon might have missed in subspecialty journals. Next, recognizing the importance of evidence-based medicine, the editors should provide opinion as to the level of evidence each paper provides, where data are randomized, what is the likelihood of beta error, sample size problems, the likelihood of selection and referral bias, and how generalizable to the average surgeon's practice is the information provided.

In summary, this book is excellent in concept, but without some refocussing will likely remain in hospital and university libraries rather than in the hands of general surgeons.

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