

Book Reviews

Surgery of the Chest, 6th edition

Edited by John A. Waldhausen, William S. Pierce, and David B. Campbell. Mosby Press, 1996. £91.50. 0 8151 9249 5

Although this book was not meant to be an encyclopedia in the surgery of the chest, it manages to cover most of the important areas related to cardiovascular and thoracic surgery, both in adults and pediatrics. It is divided into 24 logically arranged chapters.

Initial chapters use simple language and little physiology to cover the management of chest injuries without getting involved in difficult cases or giving any reference to the reader. I felt the chapter on surgical anatomy and lung resection was well done, clear and concise, although there was no mention of lung cancer management and controversies, staging and other modalities of therapy.

The only disappointment was chapter 10, which consists of only nine pages on thoracoscopic and video-assisted thoracic surgery (VATS), which I think does not reflect the advance in VATS in the last five years.

In the chapters on pacemakers and implantable cardioverters, I think the author failed to discuss the basic concept of pacing, pacemaker electrocardiography, indications, complications and other pacemaker-related issues.

The chapter on cardiac surgery starts with a nice introduction to the cannulation and cardiac support technique, then continues to artificial heart implantation without discussing problems related to these techniques.

Chapter 18 on congenital heart disease consists of 180 pages covering almost all congenital heart diseases, with a very nice illustration of the surgical technique to deal with surgical management.

The chapter on adult or acquired heart disease, I feel, is very weak in describing up-to-date management of valvular heart disease. The author spent four pages on describing what is considered to be an outdated procedure, with very limited application in the era of advancement in cardiac surgery and balloon dilatation of the mitral valve.

Again for surgical repair of mitral regurgitation, the author did not discuss intraoperative assessment of the repair with TEE. Instead, he described an old technique to check the repair by using a bulb syringe to distend the ventricle.

The chapter on the coronary artery surgery only discussed the surgical aspect of the procedures.

As a completion of this book, the last chapter on heart and lung transplantation shows a nice illustration of the surgical technique of the heart and lung and heart/lung transplantation.

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Hypertension Control - Report of a WHO Expert Committee, World Health Organization.

Contrary to my intuitive misgivings about a work produced by a committee, this technical report by an international committee of experts has several advantages.

First, it addresses a very common problem which affects 15% to 20% of populations in different regions around the world. This problem contributes to significant morbidity, mortality and health care expenditure in many areas.

Second, it addresses professionals responsible for primary health care delivery and officials responsible for preventive care policy in very plain language. It is superb in its easy readability and avoidance of complicated technical jargon.

Third, it offers practical advice concerning several aspects of the management of hypertension, keeping in mind the goal of reducing the total cardiovascular risk, primarily from hypertension, but not neglecting associated important lifestyle, habits and health conditions.

Fourth, being authored by 12 experts exposed to widely diversified health situations all over the world, it avoids the personal or local biases and provides the reader with solid facts derived from major trials.

Practitioners exposed to information bombardment about hypertension from many sources, some of which may be commercially inspired, will find this to be a brief, reliable, and readable reference. It gives comprehensive coverage in the areas of definition, epidemiology, pathophysiology, complications, clinical assessment, prevention and management. The book presents several useful tables, some of which are adapted from widely read publications on the subject. One does not expect such a book to deal with details of dosages and administration; this is left for textbooks of medicine or pharmacology. A concise table comparing major categories of antihypertensive drugs by indication and contraindication and adverse effects is very helpful. In spite of the general enthusiasm about the newer and more expensive antihypertensive drugs, the authors stress the value of lifestyle modification and preventive measures as part of a comprehensive strategy for the reduction of total cardiovascular risk. Moreover, they remind us that reduction in morbidity and mortality by lowering blood pressure was demonstrated only in long-term studies that used diuretics and/or beta blockers. The benefits of lowering blood pressure are extrapolated to other classes of drugs. This is an important fact, since economical factors may preclude long-term compliance with treatment, especially in the developing countries. The book is priced at 16 Swiss francs (and lower in developing countries), which makes it a real bargain. It should be used as a guide by all physicians treating hypertension, and a resource for those involved in public health policy decisions.

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