
Maurizio Ponz de Leon, a leading Italian scientist, has produced a fine monograph on large bowel cancer, with balanced analyses of the state of our current understanding. I particularly enjoyed his observation that 'colorectal cancer can be considered one more metabolic disorder induced by energy imbalance . . . one more price that modern society pays for the many advantages [sic] (low need for physical activity, excess food and drink, and tobacco smoking) offered by progress and civilization'.

There are clear summaries of the causative factors, with thorough overviews of premalignant states. It is worth emphasising (as Ponz de Leon reminds us) that colorectal cancer offers unique opportunities for prophylaxis via removal of the premalignant polyp. In addition, he is especially valuable on the molecular genetic aspects, which may be unfamiliar to many practising surgeons, including not only the gene mechanisms in sporadic cancer, FAP and HNPCC, but also the less frequent inherited syndromes.

The survival figures quoted for rectal cancer are much poorer than have been obtained with TME instead of the old-fashioned standard proctectomy; indeed, at least one Italian centre has published its 'before' and 'after' figures, showing clear benefits. Surgeons need to be aware that no other mode of resection is acceptable, and that cases should be centralised in order to maximise patient benefit.

The chapter on chemoprevention is a balanced review of an extremely complex and murky area, and should be required reading for all who attempt to answer the anxious question of cancer patients, namely 'What can I do?'. Another vexed area is the question of follow-up; Ponz de Leon argues convincingly what I have long suspected (but not yet had the courage to practise), which is that follow-up does not add any survival benefit. All in all this is an accessible, rounded, up-to-date review.

G. J. Oettle


This comprehensive textbook on oesophageal surgery is aimed at thoracic and general surgeons with an interest in benign and malignant oesophageal conditions. It is multi-authored with contributors mainly from Canada and the USA. A companion textbook on thoracic surgery aimed at thoracic surgeons is not reviewed here.

The chapters on physiology, anatomy and testing are comprehensive. The addition of chapters on PET scanning and endoscopic ultrasound is timely. The section on rigid oesophagoscopy is long and in my opinion mainly of historical interest for general surgeons adept at using flexible endoscopes.

The sections on antireflux surgery are comprehensive and allow expert debate on issues regarding the indications and performance of laparoscopic anti-reflux surgery. Dr Csendes from Chile presents his data on combined operations for reflux, proposing somewhat liberal additions of HSV and/or duodenal switch operations for patients with columnar lined oesophagus. This approach is cautioned against by the Editor and I would recommend restraint before embarking on such radical surgery for a condition that can often be treated medically.

The paucity of controlled trials proving superiority of any of the various different fundoplication techniques is emphasised. David Watson, however, gives a summary of the evidence to date.

Motility disorders and other benign conditions are reasonably well covered. A major criticism involves the chapter on pharyngeal and cricopharyngeal disorders. Duranceau covers the pathophysiology and indications for management of cricopharyngeal dysfunction and Zenker’s diverticulum. There is no mention however of other therapeutic options (flexible and rigid endoscopic options) apart from open surgery.

The management of oesophageal malignancy is extremely well covered by the who’s who of oesophageal surgery. I would highly recommend this book to any surgeon embarking on a career in oesophageal surgery and as a reference for those already practising.

Damon Bizos


This is the fifth edition of the Atlas of Human Anatomy. The fourth edition had three volumes, now reduced to two. The Atlas is well thought out and contains high-quality illustrations and photographs. The difference between this atlas and those I used as a medical student lies in the incorporation of colour anatomy photographs and two-dimensional imaging such as ultrasonography, MRI and CT scanning. There are fewer pictures of pro-sections in this atlas than in standard atlases. The layout is logical and easy to follow. The index is extensive. As with most atlases there is very little explanation, but for those refreshing their knowledge of anatomy it is a very easy atlas to use. For those learning anatomy it would be a good adjunct to dissection and formal anatomical texts.

Adult education should rely on the relevance of the content learned. I suspect that the inclusion of radiological images would help students at an early stage to interpret images better as they progress. I expect the next version will probably have 3-D reconstructions of MRI and CT scans that would further enhance the multidimensional aspect of this atlas.

Overall this is a high-quality atlas which has moved with the times. I would recommend it to both students and specialists in those disciplines requiring detailed human anatomy.

Damon B. Bizos


Ernst Stein’s Proktologie has long enjoyed favour in its German original; this is a newly translated English version of the fourth edition. In every respect it is a Springer spectacular — the book itself is a bibliophile's delight, well-bound, beautifully printed on high-quality paper, while the pictures are all of the quality that the older among us were wont to speak of as 'Hamilton-Bailey cases'. Through the references there is a useful entrée to the German and other continental literature, particularly valuable to the xenophobic Anglophone.

The author is a physician and a dermatologist, and this shows. The sections on conditions affecting the perianal skin are particularly fascinating, while advice on the treatment of rectal prolapse is confined to proposing a high-fibre diet! Although the
content is exhaustive, there is the constant impression that something is wrong — I can only define it as a plastic surgeon trying to handle surgical problems, with all the biases, prejudices and deficiencies that implies.

Should a surgeon buy this book? Probably not. Although the illustrations are unequalled, and the dermatological sections outstanding, the medical therapy for a number of conditions, even common conditions (e.g. inflammatory bowel disease) is idiosyncratic in the extreme. In addition, on the rare occasion that the role of surgery is conceded (e.g. for cancer), little more is said than that it might be a good idea. Indications, contraindications, complications, decision-making, to say nothing of operative detail, are all missing. There are also major gaps: incontinence is skirred over, there is no section on constipation, sclerotherapy for piles is still supported, the discussion around chemotherapy for cancer ignores the large European studies and consensus, and so on. But as a general medical text (if it is possible to imagine this region falling within the ambit of a physician) there is nothing like it on the market.

G. J. Oettle


Laparoscopy in Children is a concise book on paediatric laparoscopic surgery. The operations are limited to general paediatric surgery, with a single chapter on thoracic procedures. Specifically it does not address urological procedures except for impalpable tests.

There are a number of controversial issues in the book such as emphasis on the use of the Veres needle (this is not practised by the majority of surgeons, as most have opted for the Hasson technique). Another is the detailed description of laparoscopic surgery for inguinal hernia, intussusception and ano-rectal malformations. These procedures have yet to be accepted by most surgeons, including this reviewer.

On the other side, the book explains the common procedures such as Nissen's fundoplication, cholecystectomy, pyloromyotomy and appendectomy very well. There are ample illustrations for all the routine procedures. There is a section on trouble-shooting as commonly experienced by the laparoscopist.

The book is aimed at paediatric surgeons who have just started laparoscopic surgery. It is an easy book to read; it took me only one night to read it completely. There are other similar books in the market but perhaps with fewer illustrations. It is a useful handbook for hospitals/universities with active paediatric laparoscopic units.

B. Banieghbal


This book is a crystallisation of current thought on the subject and the editor and his team must be commended on a task well done. Dr Klein has assembled a team of experts in their field who not only have the knowledge but have taken the time to review the literature over the last years, bringing the reader an up-to-date compendium of this vast subject. To put the subject into proper perspective, approximately 25% of all research papers at the last three annual American Urology Association meetings (10 000 delegates, 2 000 papers) were devoted to CaP in all its aspects.

Briefly, the book is divided into screening, localised and advanced disease, and molecular biology. Each chapter is very well referenced. In total there are several thousand references, with information well presented to the reader in a filtered manner, leaving out unnecessary and often confusing information.

As with all multiple-author publications (now standard practice) style and format differ across the various chapters. This is most obvious in the chapter entitled 'The role of the oncologist' where the authors write a lot but say nothing that has not been said in other sections, and in truth contribute little to the value of the book.

The chapters by a lay survivor and his wife (two separate chapters) are of course a lesson to us all. They offer unique insight into how the informed patient thinks, and over time how one and his family gain knowledge of the disease. Of course the American patient is much more informed than his South African counterpart and what applies there does not necessarily apply here. I have always been a little ambivalent about 'informed consent', a process whereby a doctor teaches a patient about a disease and then asks him to decide which form of treatment he chooses — knowledge that the practitioner might have gained over years and is now imparting to a lay patient in a short period of time — bearing in mind that the practitioner may be a urologist, radiologist or medical oncologist, each having his/hers own bias. Altogether a very confusing picture if the truth be told. The patient and his spouse certainly conveyed the reality of this situation.

The various surgical techniques, including open and laparoscopic prostatectomy, are well discussed and sufficiently detailed to use as a reference on the subject. They are also very well illustrated, but what was interesting was that the hospital stay for laparoscopic prostatectomy was not detailed and I suspect will not better the short hospital stay for either retropubic or perineal prostatectomy (2-3 days).

The chapter on the biology of CaP is particularly informative and detailed with clarification of both the effects of therapy on bone metabolism including osteoporosis and osteopenia as well as osteolytic and osteosclerotic secondaries and the molecular biology of osteoblast and osteoclast interaction. The use of radiolabelled isotopes in therapy and that of bisphosphonates is very enlightening and clarified what had been confusing to me in the past.

The section on molecular biology covers a wide and intricate field and the clinician will have to read much to sort out what can be applied in clinical practice. But it is this field that has given us PSA and medical forms of therapy and much more that we as clinicians will not be capable of truly understanding, while realising its tremendous importance.

Much has been written on the difference of CaP in white and black Americans and we on the African continent should pay particular attention to this phenomenon. A reference to Africans and Africans and their comparison may shed some light on genetic differences and dietary differences that may influence the higher incidence of the disease in African Americans and Africans (224 per 100 000 v. 304 per 100 000 respectively).

Alternative and chemopreventive therapies are well described in the literature and no publication would be complete without reference to this important aspect. We are now trained to ask all patients what homopathic or alternative medicines they take and are now defining what is useful and what is not. The lay press helps to keep the public well informed and the latter now has an array of potentially useful drugs including vitamin E, selenium, zinc, COX-2 inhibitors, vitamin C and lycopene among others with which to experiment.

The volume includes a free e-book in CD format, which interestingly can only be used once and not copied. It is of course useful in many ways and may be used as a quick reference on any aspect of the publication.

Altogether this book is a very valuable and useful addition to one's library and saves much time in sourcing information elsewhere. Because of its coverage of both clinical and basic science it will also be welcomed by the urologist-in-training looking to write qualifying examinations.

L. G. Gecelcer