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BOOK REVIEW

M.G. Fehlings, A.R. Vaccaro, M. Boakye, S. Rossignol, J.F. Ditunno Jr, A.S. Burns (eds): *Essentials of Spinal Cord Injury—Basic Research to Clinical Practice*

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When I start a book review, William of Baskerville's statement from Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*: "Books are not made to be believed, but to be subjected to inquiry" suddenly comes to mind. Inquiring this reference book in the field of spinal cord injury (SCI) will be for me both challenging and honouring.

Spinal cord injury is a devastating condition both for the patient and the carer, requiring a multidisciplinary approach by the healthcare providers. Therefore, it was time to have a comprehensive reference book available, addressing all aspects of SCI management: clinical practice (both medical and surgical), basic research, resources and future developments. It is with this in mind that *Essentials of Spinal Cord Injury—Basic Research to Clinical Practice* was conceived.

I personally do not agree about the "Bible" status attributed to this book by the "Forward" writer, Edward Benzel. Nevertheless, there is no question that it has been written by world-class and well-recognised experts on the topic. They are known to be not only among the pioneers in the SCI field but also known to be concise and straightforward in their thoughts.

The book fulfils its purpose well, covering the SCI field in a compilation of seven chapters. The first one is on "Principles of SCI Practice". It reviews anatomy, pathophysiology, symptoms, imaging, basic medical and surgical management, early and late complications, and prognosis. This is, in my opinion, the section that may serve as a ready source of reference material for specialists in the field. The second chapter, "Controversies in Management", starts by facing the debated issue of timing of surgery. Then, specific and challenging

conditions like cervical facet dislocation and central cord syndrome are discussed. This section should have deserved more space in the book. The following chapter on "Neuroprotective and Neuroregenerative Approaches" is essential to understand the ongoing research on SCI. These approaches are thought to stop the progression from the primary mechanical to the secondary metabolic injury, which may have a crucial impact on the outcome of such patients. The challenge to create a good animal model and to reproduce in men what is useful in animals still exists, and it may explain the failure of most of the ongoing trials. The "Neurophysiology and Imaging" chapter provides important information both to the surgeon (preoperative planning, assessment of lesions, intraoperative monitoring, etc...) and to the rehabilitator (preserved function to rehabilitate, follow-up, spasticity's treatment). The new and interesting concept of a central pattern generator and its role in SCI recovery monopolises the first part of the fifth chapter, "Plasticity and Recovery". The treatment of the so-called stabilised and definitive SCI is detailed in the second half, focusing on electrical stimulation, robotics and peripheral nerve graft. Collecting valuable observational data from population-based national registries may provide useful information to the clinical practice, as shown in the "Resources" chapter. Further, the achievement of socially active and meaningful roles from SCI patients may enhance their quality of life. A comprehensive list of books, personal stories, magazines, videos, web sites, organisations and others are provided at the end of this essential chapter. The emerging fields of "Neurogenomics and Neuroproteomics Approaches" have made major advances in the area of neurotrauma research, through the identification of several candidate markers, leading to a better understanding of the underlining post-injury biochemistry.

The layout of all these chapters is incredibly well done. Each chapter is colour-coded, facilitating its recognition.

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The illustrations are really nice and easy to understand. The presence of “Key Points” and “Pearls and Pitfalls” at the beginning and the end of chapters, respectively, provides the readers with a quick overview and take-home message, easy to keep in mind. The references are updated and appropriate.

Although I do not consider this book as a “Bible” in the field, I’ll likely refer to it in the future when confronted with

these challenging patients. I agree that it should be available in the libraries of spine surgeons, nurses, rehabilitators, researchers and students. In a few words, it successfully passed my inquisitional review.

Conflict of Interest None.