

Book Reviews

Essential Surgical Technique

C. D. Johnson and J. Cumming, Eds.
Chapman and Hall Medical, 1998.
314 pages; price £24.99.

This book aims to provide a practical guide to Basic Surgical Training (BST). In guiding the reader through the surgical specialities the author's aims are easily achieved. The foundations of surgical instruments, haemostasis, knot tying and tissue handling are initially described, as are the principles of local anaesthesia, sedation and postoperative analgesia. The perioperative management section describes common problems in the surgical patient but does not explore the recent developments in sepsis and the systemic inflammatory response syndrome. There is a useful section on resuscitation techniques utilising ATLS guidelines and the management of problems commonly encountered in the emergency department. The importance and prevention of secondary head injury and the management of the single lymph node in the neck are succinctly covered in the relevant sections.

In the section on cardiothoracic surgery, the authors describe the essential basic procedures but then expand their remit to more advanced techniques. However, basic trainees might not be expected to undertake procedures such as rigid oesophagoscopy, Celestin intubation, or pericardiostomy. The balance of the book is redressed in the final chapters which deal with management of common general, paediatric and urological surgical problems.

This book will be of use to BSTs and could also serve as a refresher for surgeons who are re-entering clinical training after a period of dedicated research. The text is easy to read, well illustrated and uses margin boxes to highlight important points. The book is competitively priced and bridges an important gap between surgical texts for clinical medical students and those aimed at higher surgical examinations.

I. Nyamekye
Bristol, U.K.

Frontiers in Cerebrovascular disease

J. T. Toberston and T. Nowak, Eds.
Futura, 1998.
359 pages; price \$98.

Monographs published by the American Heart Association can always be regarded as state of the art publications and this collection of reviews and essays is no exception, based as it is on the proceedings of the 20th Princeton Conference. The basic science of thrombosis is now so complex that a review such as this is helpful for the clinician who wishes to learn something about important recent developments including homocysteinaemia and adhesion molecules. Cell death, restoration and some of the mechanisms involved in the brain in these processes are reviewed. These are not chapters for the faint hearted looking for the great leap ahead in therapeutics, but a serious dose of "frontier" neuroscience. Discussion of emerging therapy is limited to the risks of intracranial haemorrhage following thrombolysis, with most emphasis on the studies undertaken with rTPA. This is useful so far as it goes, but what is desperately needed is an individual patient meta-analysis of all trials of thrombolytic agents in stroke, rTPA and streptokinase. We then need a large pragmatic clinical trial which will tell us once and for all whether thrombolysis has a place in the management of people with stroke. At \$98 the determined strokologist might just persuade a library to buy this book, but the vascular surgeon could make a better investment elsewhere.

G. S. Venables
Sheffield, U.K.

Stress Echocardiography

Picano E. Ed.,
Springer, 1997.
306 pages; price £45.50.

In his third edition of what is reputed to be a best seller, the techniques, applications, advantages and

pitfalls of stress echocardiography are comprehensively covered. All the basic methods of inducing stress and the techniques for acquiring the images are addressed. Stress echocardiography has been enthusiastically adopted by cardiologists in Europe and North America as a useful method of both detecting and determining the functional importance of myocardial ischaemia. In the United Kingdom cardiologists have been more sceptical for a number of reasons. The level of echocardiographic expertise amongst clinical cardiologists in the U.K. is more variable than in Europe and North America, and those who do show interest have to balance this against overwhelming clinical workloads. What the busy cardiologist wants to know about stress echocardiography is what incremental diagnostic ability does it have over existing methods? How subjective is it and what are the relative sensitivities and specificities of the method? Can one live without it? This book will provide the enthusiast with a wealth of useful information, references and provide a solid foundation on which to build. However, it will not convert those cardiologists who doubt the method's objectivity and incremental diagnostic ability. Stress echocardiography is, by its very nature, a practical and dynamic method, and still frame images and graphs cannot convey its value.

The text of this volume is small and difficult to read, and the vast majority of illustrations are in black and white and uninspiring. Seeing the simultaneous playback of a left ventricle contracting with side images on a quad screen cannot be reproduced in a text of this type, but larger and clearer representative images would help. Data on the prognostic value of stress echocardiography is scant and a separate chapter with a comprehensive review of the existing literature is really essential in a book of this type. However, the chapter on microvascular disease is welcome: these patients often undergo unnecessary coronary angiography because of abnormal exercise tests – the fact that dipyridamole echocardiography is normal in such patients may be of enormous clinical value if coronary angiography can indeed be avoided.

In summary, this book is a useful reference for those performing stress echocardiography, and can be used to learn the foundations of the technique. At £45 it is likely to be bought for the echo lab rather than by an individual. However, the book is not particularly "user-friendly", and will not convince those sceptical and busy cardiologists to adopt the method widely. They may need to venture into an echo lab to see stress echo in action!

S. J. D. Brecker
London, U.K.

Vascular Diagnosis with Ultrasound

M. Hennerici, D. Neuerberg-Heusler, eds.
Thieme. 499 pages; price DM268.

This book is a comprehensive review of Ultrasound Diagnosis in Vascular Medicine. It is written by a multi-specialty team whose director is a neurologist at the University of Heidelberg. Initially written in German, it has recently been revised extensively for this first English version. This version includes recent technological advances, data from large study trials and current literature on research and experimental process (echo contrast media, harmonic imaging, 3D and 4D imaging, flow volume measurements and functional studies). There is also a new chapter dealing with the utility of color-flow duplex sonography in oncology. In addition, the book contains a very important chapter of case histories in which the common clinical situations are illustrated by real cases. Each case is presented and solved using all available US techniques, and the case is discussed according to technical and clinical issues including therapeutic options.

The book is beautifully presented with tables, figures and bold characters at the head of sub-chapters to allow easy referencing by the reader. After a short introduction on the basic ultrasound principles and instruments used, the various arterial and venous territories are examined successively. In each chapter, the technique of examination is fully explained including the choice of appropriate transducers, US mode, and physiological manoeuvres that can enhance diagnostic capability. Normal findings are then presented including biometric data, if necessary, with reference to the most recent publications. An interesting feature is the explanation of all the possible sources of error that may limit the quality of the results attained by both beginners and experienced users. These artifacts are explained with physiopathological or physical reasons when possible together with a description of technical corrections to be used. This is followed by a review of the pathological findings with their related sources of error, including also an overview of diagnostic effectiveness, including more than 750 illustrations of high photographic quality including true-color duplex images of the screen and more than 50 tables including literature.

The book also includes a very useful glossary containing more than 150 words, that allows a rapid check in case of a difficult word, name or abbreviation. A comprehensive index of approximately 2000 entries allows fast retrieval of selected information. The bibliography includes updated references classified by chapter and following alphabetical order. The only