

Surgical management of cerebrovascular disease

R. Eugene Zierler, New York, 1994, McGraw-Hill, 514 pages.

Perhaps better entitled "Surgical Management of Extracranial Cerebrovascular Disease," this text provides a clear and concise, well-referenced compilation of our understanding of the subject matter to date. Its publication is extremely timely in light of the recent National Institutes of Health announcements regarding the preliminary results from the prospective randomized symptomatic and asymptomatic carotid endarterectomy trials. Bringing together expertise from the fields of vascular surgery, anesthesiology, radiology, pathology, neurology, and neurologic surgery, the editor presents the information from these diverse fields in a logical way that facilitates its application to the daily practice of any physician who treats patients with these diseases. The book is composed of 32 chapters organized into five sections. Minimal redundancy is present in this multiauthored text, and the editor goes to great lengths to refer the reader to the chapter(s) dealing with the specific subject when it occurs. Section I reviews the anatomy and pathophysiology of extracranial cerebrovascular disease. The embryology of the cerebral arteries and their collateral vessels is discussed, along with chapters on the pathogenesis of atherosclerosis, the mechanisms of cerebral ischemia, and nonatherosclerotic disorders of the cerebral circulation. An extremely detailed and well-referenced chapter on the epidemiology and natural history of cerebrovascular disease is part of section II of the text dealing with the clinical manifestations. Included in this section are chapters discussing the presentation and clinical evaluation of patients with carotid artery and vertebrobasilar ischemia; an excellent resource for students and residents. Section III provides discussions of both established and new approaches to the diagnostic evaluation of these patients, including indirect cerebrovascular testing, duplex scanning, transcranial Doppler scanning, magnetic resonance angiography, and conventional arteriography. Section IV is especially valuable for those clinicians involved in providing care to patients with cerebrovascular disease. Therapeutic issues, with emphasis on nonsurgical treatments, clinical trials, and indications for surgery, are discussed fairly and provide the latest information available on the subject. Management algorithms based on the incontrovertible data from the prospective trials are presented along with concise discussions of the remaining areas of controversy in patient treatment. Well-referenced discussions on the difficult subjects of combined carotid and coronary artery disease and carotid endarterectomy without arteriography are provided in this section as well. Section V presents a number of chapters dealing specifically with surgical management. Included among these are chapters on anesthesia and cerebral protection, the timing of surgical intervention, operative techniques and results, complications of carotid endarterectomy, and recurrent carotid artery stenosis. Additional chapters on neck trauma, vertebrobasilar reconstruction, and carotid body tumors are provided for completeness.

Most of the chapters in this book are extremely well written, making for an eminently readable text on this controversial subject. It is a valuable resource for any physician who is closely involved in the treatment of patients with cerebrovascular disease, and it provides a well-referenced, thoughtful, overview of the subject for students and residents who are interested in a more detailed understanding of the issues surrounding these patients.

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Vascular surgery

Robert B. Rutherford, Philadelphia, 1995, WB Saunders, 2240 pages, \$260.

A correspondent apologized for writing a long letter with the excuse that he had no time to write a short one. The 14 editors of this enormous and successful book, struggling to marshal an army of 181 experts into 2000 pages of text by a common deadline, will know just what he meant. The casual reader will be tempted to admire this book on grounds of labor and size alone, and the diligent will identify significant improvements since the previous edition of 1989 when there were only 159 contributors.

Many chapters give authoritative help with clarity and economy. A few, including some by editors who should know better, are gridlocked with an abundance of unprocessed data posing as useful information. A textbook should try to represent all aspects of vascular surgery from its academic peaks to its idiosyncratic troughs, but we must judge it by the standards of analytical rigor and efficient access. Many chapters include historical vignettes that range from the intriguing (Jobst in the swimming pool), through the regurgitated (Hunter's observations on the antler), to the traditional but incomplete (sympathectomy). Worthy ancestors are sometimes neglected, as in the description of Homan's operation, whereas ghosts of the past, like renal ptosis, are given more respect than they deserve. Some contributors include techniques that really should be history, such as the Unna boot and the use of isotopes to determine amputation level.

Occasionally we have a glimpse of history in the making as when attractive but discredited ideas are recycled without evidence. The quality of a chapter is often well illustrated by its tables. Many are exemplary ("Intermittent Claudication"), but a few are marred by significant omissions, and the European literature is frequently neglected. Because tabulated errors are more influential than bias concealed in prose, the editors need comprehensive knowledge and vigilance to avoid them.

The rules for life-table analysis are given in the text, but editors have nonetheless allowed them to be broken (endarterectomy) and have also allowed statements that are blatantly clumsy ("long in length"), unhelpful because unqualified ("acute renal dysfunction varies from 0% to