Book Reviews

Vascular and Endovascular Surgery (Second Edition)
J. D. Beard and P. Gaines.
W. B. Saunders Ltd.
546 pages, price £59.95.

Evidence-based medicine is a logical approach that, based as it is upon rigorous scientific analysis, can be expected to improve standards of care as physicians apply it, increasingly, in their daily practices. For the effective dissemination of this methodology throughout the medical community there must be a reciprocal improvement in the standards of medical publication. It is no longer acceptable for a treatment to be advocated without presenting, or at least identifying the source of, the data to justify it. This book is one of eight volumes that together comprise the second edition of the "A Companion To Surgical Practice" series. A key feature of this second edition is the explicit presentation of the "evidence" to support the practices and techniques described, not only in the form of exhaustive and up-to-date reference lists at the end of each chapter but also by the inclusion in the text of summaries of the evidence extracted from the relevant publications and high-lighted for the reader in bold type and a small scalpel-symbol in the margin. These devices, as applied in "Vascular and Endovascular Surgery" are extremely effective and in this respect the editors are certainly to be highly congratulated. However, given the rapid pace at which today's evidence is supplanted by new data, successive editions of the series will need to follow rapidly in order to keep up to date. There are a few examples already of highly relevant recent reports, which have appeared in print, since the publication deadline and are therefore not included.

Within its 546 pages the book endeavours to encompass the subject matter of vascular pathology and its treatment in its entirety and it does so surprisingly successfully. This is achieved by application of a remarkably uniform economy of style, especially for a "multi-authored" textbook. With very few exceptions the chapters are eminently readable and the technique of highlighting the key points, referred to above, enhances the ease with which the reader can identify and retain important messages.

For the most part, essential "core" issues are dealt with in considerable depth. Perhaps one exception is that of the diabetic foot. Two physicians have written this chapter and the emphasis is, understandably, upon the prevention and conservative treatment of ulceration in diabetic patients, the importance of which is not doubted. But, in the opinion of the reviewer, essential messages regarding the surgical management of diabetic gangrene should have been given greater prominence in a textbook directed primarily at surgeons.

There are two important chapters entitled "Vascular grafts, sutures and anastomoses" and "Angioplasty and stents" that include basic information that enhances the comprehension of many of the other chapters. Yet perversely these chapters appear towards the end of the book, at numbers 15 and 16 respectively from a total of 20. It may be a relatively small point but, surely, the chapters could be ordered more logically.

A final criticism relates to the relative emphasis placed upon the "Vascular" and "Endovascular" contents of the book. The title implies a balanced appraisal of these two principal treatment modalities and an editorial team that is composed of one vascular surgeon and one interventional vascular radiologist reinforces this impression. However, the authorship of the book includes just six radiologists out of a total of thirty-seven. This is despite the fact that in the U.K., from where most of the authors are drawn, vascular radiologists perform the vast majority of endovascular interventions. There are two chapters dedicated to endovascular interventions; "Angioplasty and stents" and "Endovascular management of aortic aneurysms and dissections", which are excellent. The chapters dealing with renal and extra-cranial carotid arterial disease are also reasonably comprehensive in their coverage of the endovascular options. But, with these exceptions, the focus of the book appears to be upon conventional vascular surgery rather than endovascular surgery. For example, the chapter on the management of vascular trauma contains only the
briefest reference to endovascular options. As a result, it is doubtful whether, having absorbed the contents of this book, the reader could legitimately consider himself to be equally well informed about “Endovascular” surgery as he is about “Vascular” surgery. For this reason the book is likely to have greater appeal to vascular surgeons than vascular radiologists. But, in this age of multidisciplinary teams, this eminently readable and informative book is strongly recommended to all involved in the management of patients with vascular disease irrespective of their primary speciality. At £59.95 it is not cheap, but it does represent reasonable value for money.

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Vascular Surgical Approaches
A. Branchereau, R. Berguer, Eds.
Futura Publishing Company, Inc., 1999
331 pages, price $115.

This present volume is based on a previous congress on vascular approaches and turns out to be a re-edited version of a previous French book “Voies d’Abord des Vaisseaux”, published back in 1995. The editors’ main intention is to present and explain the most common basic exposures of vascular structures as a first-step tool especially to vascular surgeons in training. The book is a combination of a classical textbook with a surgical atlas and covers almost all the conventional approaches to arteries and veins, excluding endovascular ones. Those already in practice will find interest in some unusual approaches, such as the access to the intrapetrosal internal carotid artery or the suboccipital approach to the vertebral artery. These may be helpful in special cases.

This multi-author book is written by a total of 48 authors, mainly French from three different countries (38 French, nine U.S. and one Dutch). It describes in detail the anatomy, exposure and technique of the vascular approaches with plenty of figures (283 illustrations), i.e. drawings in black and white. The illustrations are the work of medical artist Jean-Pierre Jacomy.

The 331 pages are divided into 31 chapters reviewing most anatomical aspects of all relevant areas: access to the supraaortic vessels, thoracic and abdominal aorta, visceral arteries, lower and upper extremities. The text is richly illustrated and written in a didactic fashion. It mainly centres on the common approaches of arterial and venous surgery. Many self-explanatory black and white drawings are of good quality describing frequently encountered anatomic situations, although they are sometimes too schematic. Each chapter follows a standard format of a review article with description of the conventional technique and showing also alternative techniques. Most chapters are well referenced with key references for further reading. The book contains a short index which seems difficult for readers unfamiliar with the topics.

In conclusion, the book is balanced, comprehensive and informative and certainly a valuable resource for the vascular trainees providing clear anatomic strategies to find a well-thought-out solution in their daily practice. The moderate price is certainly worth the investment.

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