Book Review


It is a short and concise introduction to the intricate problems associated with access surgery. It covers most of the field: indications, surgical techniques, complications and surveillance for example. Chapters on peritoneal dialysis and the role of the vascular access nurse specialist have also been included in this edition. The book reflects very much the situation and views of UK specialists who have written all of the 18 chapters except one. An excellent section on vascular access in children is written by Pierre Bourquelot.

Every chapter ends with a Key Summary with the most important points, which is a nice feature. All chapters also include a moderate but adequate number of references to support the statements. The chapter on interventions to restore or maintain patency includes a number of statements which are not backed up by references. The chapter on radiological assessment prior to surgery recommends MR venography for investigating central venous problems and does not mention that nephrogenic systemic sclerosis, has been described following some MR contrast media containing gadolinium. This is surprising since the complication was described at the beginning of 2006.

At what stage of chronic renal disease should a vascular access be constructed? The different chapters give slightly different recommendations regarding the timing of referral to a vascular specialist and the construction of an AV fistula or an AV graft. A better consensus on this area by the editors would have been beneficial. Much of this controversy probably stems from the shortage of vascular access surgeons in the UK, necessitating early referral and surgery to minimize the percentage of patients starting haemodialysis as an emergency with central catheters. There is also some overlap between different chapters, DOQI and UK guidelines can be read in at least two chapters with slightly different wording which is unnecessary. The illustrations are all black and white and some of the pictures of operations are not very clear and could certainly be improved.

The author of the chapter on peritoneal dialysis prefers straight Tenckhoff catheters. My experience is that these dislocate out of the pelvis much more frequently than the curled catheters.

This book has a good coverage of the subject and is primarily of interest to nephrologists, surgeons and radiologist but also to dialysis nurses or other members of the dialysis team. Even the experienced access surgeon will get some new ideas from reading this book since access surgery very often is a question of being inventive. The book can easily be carried in a coat pocket. The prize is £30 and I think it gives good value for money.

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