
This is the second volume on foot and ankle surgery in the series produced by the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. It is important to note that the foot and ankle has been given the same status as the other regional subspecialties. The book fulfills the expectations aroused by the title. It is not a textbook and does require some prior knowledge. There is useful information and discussion. The references are divided into current and ‘classic’.

In the section on calcaneal fractures, although the bias is towards operative treatment, it is admitted that there is so far only one small randomised controlled trial to support this. There is little detail on ankle arthroplasty other than a statement that so far it has not stood the test of time, and that fusion after a failed implant is difficult. Sensible advice is a feature of the editorship.

The book is ideal for FRCS Orth candidates who want a sound basis for their knowledge of the common problems of the foot and ankle. It will ensure success in the examination, and as consultants will protect them from litigation resulting from failure to manage adequately patients with simple disorders such as hallux valgus, Freiberg’s disease, and curly toes.

Leslie Klenerman.


The latest edition of Vascular disorders of the upper extremity has drawn contributors from a multitude of disciplines. The diverse backgrounds of the authors are a major part of the attraction of the text and reflect the broad range of clinical specialties now regularly included in the management of disorders of the upper limb.

To us the most useful section of the book is the first which addresses diagnosis and valuation. Many clinicians will not be familiar with the evolving multitude of non-invasive investigations available for the assessment of disease of the upper limb. Not only are the techniques clearly described in this edition, but also, most importantly, are their indications. The interpretation of results calls for expertise because of their infrequent application. Ultrasonographic and Doppler investigations are discussed in particular detail.

The second section on problems of cumulative trauma is the largest; the greater part is dedicated to thoracic outlet syndromes and costobrachial pain. Repetitive strain disorders, which are increasing in profile with the advent of so many ‘keyboard’-based occupations, are well covered with emphasis on both positive and negative features regarding management.

The third section on intrinsic and acquired disorders in the upper limb, and the final section on vascular manifestations of systemic disease, discuss specialist conditions and the pitfalls of differential diagnosis in patients with vasculitis, an area not well covered in most surgical texts.

We feel that this book can well be recommended to those who have an interest in disorders of the upper limb. Our main disappointment is the lack of colour pictures. It is a shame that some of the excellent operative photographs could not be appreciated to their full extent!

Jonathan D. Smouth
Nicholas J. W. Cheshire.


The management of spinal disorders has become more complex over the last two decades, spurred on by developments in imaging and a better understanding of spinal biomechanics. In order to deal with the full spectrum of spinal problems, the surgeon needs to be able to approach the spine confidently, both anteriorly and posteriorly from C1 to the sacrum. The surgical field for an anterior approach to the spine is often transgressed by neurovascular structures, the anatomy of which must be known in detail and is often distorted, particularly in the presence of tumour and infection. This means that very careful planning has to be undertaken preoperatively so that the approach is structurally sound and allows the pathology to be dealt with adequately.

The present training of spinal registrars and consultants means that many surgeons have not had experience in other disciplines in which familiarity can breed expertise. The surgeon should always be prepared to show humility and seek advice and assistance from colleagues.

This book is a comprehensive description of the indications, anatomy, surgical pitfalls and the outcome of each approach to the front of the spine. It is written by experienced spinal surgeons and is comprehensive and informative. Even when the approach is well known, useful advice is given. I recommend it to anybody who is undertaking these procedures.

T. R. Morley.


This book contains everything that one would ever want to know about herniation of the lumbar disc and a great deal more besides. Its expositive style provides in-depth information and sound clinical perspective based on the experience of Professor Postacchini and his fellow contributors, mostly from the University of La Sapienza in Rome.

The work is a most readable translation from the Italian original. At the start, there is historical perspective detailing how sciatica confounded ancient civilizations until the discoveries of Mixter and Barr in the 20th century and later still, the
demystification brought by MRI. The chapters on anatomy and morbid anatomy are enhanced by the superb clarity of Professor Rauschning’s sections. Histological and biochemical studies of discs at different ages are described and the constitutional and biomechanical factors which predispose to disc disease are clearly outlined.

Clinical features assume great importance as might be expected from the Editor’s own meticulous work on clinical examination. Nevertheless, the laborious delineation of every conceivable permutation of neurological change in the nerve root, repeated for every level of disc pathology, and for each possible direction of the disc hernia, would seem to be excessive for the reader to whom this book is directed. It does, however, serve to illustrate the paramount importance of clinical assessment in an area where imaging techniques may show lesions which are irrelevant to the patient’s syndrome and are known to be common findings in asymptomatic individuals.

Two chapters are devoted to objective investigations, imaging and neurophysiological testing, and another to the adverse influence of psychological factors on diagnosis and treatment. Good examples are given of conditions which mimic discogenic sciatica. The striking contrast between high-quality MR images and less distinct CT scans prompts surprise that diagnostic algorithms recommend CT as the investigation of choice in patients below 50 years of age with uncomplicated sciatica or low back pain.

This book excels in the sections on treatment. After appropriate consideration of the natural history and potential for spontaneous improvement, every possible conservative treatment and operative intervention are described in great detail. Michael Mayer contributes to a balanced overview on percutaneous techniques while the Editor’s own preference for microdiscectomy is suppressed sufficiently to allow a fair comparison with other procedures.

There is a mine of useful information regarding success rates, complications, failed surgery and recurrent disc herniation which is germane to the practice of evidence-based medicine. The closing chapter on professional liability with examples of court rulings in cases of alleged malpractice is poignant at a time when clinical governance will mean greater scrutiny of the actions of spinal surgeons.

Readers should not be put off by the size of this book. With a bibliography of over 2000 references, it is a fully illustrated account of all that is currently known about the lumbar disc. It will be an indispensable reference book in every department of spinal surgery and the ideal starting point for anyone involved in a research project on the lumbar spine. In an era of increasing medical litigation, advisers will find all the information which they need as well as the wisdom and clinical perspective gained from many years of making difficult value judgements in the management of this pernicious condition.


The management of the insensitive limb is an important but neglected area of practice. The principles are the same for patients with leprosy, diabetic neuropathy, spina bifida and lesions of nerves. Paul Brand was the first to emphasise the similarity of management for patients with leprosy and diabetic neuropathy and Grace Warren has followed his example. She has worked in many underdeveloped countries and the treatment which she advocates is simple. It does not involve sophisticated technology but does stress the team approach with contributions from physiotherapists, occupational therapists, orthotists, chiropodists and nurses.

There is detail on how to apply total contact plaster casts, an invaluable method suited to orthopaedic practice, and discussion on transfer of the tibialis posterior and on hindfoot arthrodeses.

Study of this text will remove the barrier of ignorance which leads to confusion between neuropathic arthropathy and osteomyelitis. This book must be on the shelves of the libraries of all orthopaedic departments.

Leslie Klenerman.

Books received
