



Book Reviews

Surgical Approaches to the Spine

Edited by Albert, Balderson & Northrup
Publishers: Harcourt Brace 224 pp.
ISBN 0 7216 4554 2 £89.00

This is an excellent book which will be of value not only to orthopaedic surgeons but neurosurgeons who have an interest in spinal surgery. Both trainees and consultants will benefit from this book. Operating department staff would also find the book of value.

My only criticism of the work is two omissions. First there is no description of the transpedicular approach to the thoracic disc space – an approach which is well worth having within one's surgical repertoire. Second, most British surgeons favour a right sided approach to the neck. A short section covering the anatomical differences from the left would be helpful. Also it may be helpful, particularly for trainee surgeons, to have some idea of the incidence of the various complications which are described.

The book is well produced and laid out in an easy to read fashion interspersed with pictures, diagrams, and photographs all of which complement the text. The quality of the art work is outstanding. The reference lists at the end of the chapters cite the relevant texts.

This book is extremely relevant to current practice. The number of procedures being carried out for spinal degenerative disease is increasing rapidly.

In spite of my criticisms, I would have no hesitation to recommend that all neurosurgical and orthopaedic departments who are involved in spinal surgery obtain a copy of this excellent and sensibly priced book. I look forward to the second edition, perhaps with my criticisms addressed.

NSR Brooke

The Nonsurgical Management of Acute Low Back Pain

Authors: EG Gonzalez and RS Materson
Publishers: Demos Vermande 271 pp.
ISBN 1 8887 9913 7 \$99.00

Gonzalez and Materson have created a text which comprehensively summarizes the nonsurgical management

of acute low back pain. The editors note that the chapters in the book were expanded from a course sponsored by the Association of Academic Physiatrists for the purpose of addressing the controversy surrounding the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (AHCPR) guidelines.

To this end the authors have done a credible job in their critique of the guidelines. They have clearly articulated the major weakness with the AHCPR guidelines such as the superficial nature of the history and physical examination in the assessment of acute low back pain and the lumping of all back pain together without differentiating by cause. The guidelines, conclude that due to lack of hard science, certain therapeutic modalities are not indicated. Most physicians treating low back pain will have difficulty accepting this assertion. The individual chapters go to great length to provide the reader with the authors personal experience which unquestionably in the role of acute low back pain is of equal if not greater benefit as a Meta analysis. The book in addition brings more recent and compelling evidence of the efficacy of several of the non-operative modalities and this illustrates the ability of new information to render clinical guidelines obsolete.

This book is primarily directed to the primary care physician who is the first to encounter a patient with activity limitations due to symptoms in the low back and/or leg. Each chapter reviews the literature as reviewed by the AHCPR guidelines and in addition adds personal experience of each author. As such the reader is able to choose the various treatment modalities and judge for himself their role in their own practices.

The book reads well, is not technical, has a comprehensive reference list and is well indexed.

This book is timely and extremely relevant to the current practice of medicine given that low back pain is so prevalent in our society. For \$99.00 I feel this is an excellent purchase and will make an excellent resource for the primary care physician treating low back pain.

JA Finkelstein
Assistant Professor
University of Toronto