



Book Reviews

Spine Surgery

Authors: Edward C Benzel

Published by: Harcourt Brace: 1500pp.

ISBN: 0 4430 75409 £215.00

This book has been written primarily by and for Neurosurgeons, which is not a bad thing. In the section on Spinal Dysraphism, which is excellent, it says the symptoms can be sensorimotor, sphincteric or orthopaedic, which is a catholic interpretation of the speciality. The book is extremely comprehensive, the bibliography is up-to-date but the logic of the chapters is somewhat difficult to understand, for example, chapter 62 is 'Vascularised bone grafts', chapter 63 is 'Pain and spasticity' and chapter 64 is 'Bone graft harvesting'. A great deal is made of surgical technique, which is very useful. In the preface, they say that the book is, in many respects, a techniques book. I do not believe it is a book that anyone would read from page 1 to page 1500. However, all the information that one would need is in it and it will be used as a reference book. There are many other slightly similar books, which are not so comprehensive.

It is somewhat surprising that minimally invasive techniques of decompression or fusion of the lumbar spine commands 5 pages out of 1500, when this is, by far, the most common operation undertaken on the spine. The most interesting part to read is the 'post-script' section, which is devoted to the economics of practice management and then a section of controversies. In this, two sections are written for and against a problem, such as to decompress or not in minimal myelopathy for cervical spondylosis; Allograft or Autograft; ventral *versus* dorsal surgery for ventral thoracic fractures.

This is a book that should be in the library of anybody taking a major interest in spinal surgery. Within the confines of a District General Hospital, there are other books that would be more suitable for the treatment of run-of-the-mill low back problems and spinal trauma. It is good value for a book which is completely up-to-date and could be used as the only reference book one needs.

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John Hughlings Jackson: Father of English Neurology

Authors: Macdonald Critchley and Eileen Critchley

Published by: Oxford University Press: 228pp.

ISBN: 512 3395 Price: £39.50

It was said of Hughlings Jackson that there was scarcely a neurological problem which was not elucidated by him and that his writings became the Bible of Neurology (Foerster).

He had been described by many people as 'the neurologists neurologist'. He was venerated by his colleagues and his influence on neurological thinking was truly worldwide. Despite all this, in a way which is perhaps peculiar to Britain, Hughlings Jackson never had any recognition by the state in terms of a knighthood or some other honour. He was never a professor (I remember MacDonal Critchley telling eminent overseas visitors who insisted on calling him Professor, that the title Professor was regarded in Britain as a derogatory term). Hughlings Jackson was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society but, considering the enormous contribution he made, he was poorly recognised by this country.

MacDonald Critchley and his wife Eileen Critchley have written a superb book on this most interesting man. Critchley talks about the 'sheer love my teachers had for their colleague 100 years ago', and states that in his 97 years, he had never known any other neurologist to arouse such deep affection. I think this book is the last book which MacDonald Critchley wrote and it is a fitting end to Critchleys' own fascinating neurological life. Eileen did a great deal of the research as regards the family tree on both sides, at the same time as Critchley started to write a short paper which grew and grew into this excellent book. The book is a tribute to a great neurologist whose genius was based, not on technology nor on animal experimentation, but solely on clinical observation and astute judgement. But it is more than that, because in following Hughlings Jackson's life, MacDonald and Eileen Critchley have given us a wonderful account of the training of medical students in the mid 19th century, starting, in Hughlings Jackson's case, with apprenticeship in 1850 to a general practitioner in York. Two years later he became a student at York Medical School (which no longer exists), and was a close friend of Jonathan Hutchinson. He subsequently completed his medical training at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London. Hutchinson often discussed with Hughlings Jackson whether or not the lack of any university training was a draw-back to them. He stated that neither of them had 'been even to any high class school, and both had, I believe, ended our educational curriculum at the age of 17, when we were apprenticed and became medical students'. In 1859 Hughlings Jackson was appointed to the Metropolitan, a small hospital in the East End of London and a year later, what was to become The National Hospital for the Paralysed and Epileptic, Queen Square, was founded. Jackson was appointed Assistant Physician to the National Hospital in 1862 and a full position in 1867.

The wonderful combination of Jackson's life and the amazing advances he made in Neurology, coupled with the excellent illustrations makes this a most fascinating and readable book.

I recommend this book without reservation.

LS Illis