Book Review

doi:10.1038/sj.sc.3101292

MASTERCASES: Spine Surgery

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Published by Thieme: Stuttgart, Germany; New York, USA: 2001. TNY ISBN 0-86577-924-4; GTV ISBN 3-13-125991-4 €177.93

The programme 'Desert Island Discs', will be familiar to many. For those who don't have the benefit of British radio the principle is very simple. An invited guest star selects ten pieces of music he would choose to take with him were he to find himself stranded on a desert island.

With increasing specialisation in orthopaedics and neurosurgery many who strive to practice the art of spinal surgery may feel that they too have been isolated, to some degree at least, on their own professional desert island, with new and unfamiliar challenges to be met and dealt with on a daily basis.

To assist him in meeting these challenges there is no doubt that the spinal surgeon has available a veritable library of text books, many of them extremely weighty. But if the surgeon has to pick a limited selection of books to take with him to his spinal surgery desert island, which ones would be on the list? For me, *MASTERCASES: Spine Surgery* would undoubtedly be in there. Of course, in the practical sense we do have to choose. Even if we have the luxury of a very extensive library, time constraints will hone down our selection to a few that we use on a regular basis. While comprehensive dissertations dealing with the epidemiology, aetiology, pathology and so forth are fascinating, in the main what the spinal surgeon wants to know is how to deal with the clinical problem that he is facing at that moment.

Extracting such pertinent information can often be remarkably difficult.

This is not the case with *MASTERCASES: Spine Surgery*. Individual problems are presented in a manner which is not only helpful but enticing to read. Without compromising on important detail each subject is dealt with succinctly in a format based around a case presentation that is reminiscent of the informal case discussions which often occur at scientific meetings and which many of us find so helpful and enjoyable. Indeed, in the same way that one might pick up little gems of wisdom from such discussions, each chapter introduces its own 'pearls' and 'pitfalls' in the management of the problem concerned.

After presenting the case history the authors dealing with each subject (and there are over 60 well chosen clinical problems covering all areas of the spine) go on to discuss in a useful and practical manner the clinical management, and particularly the operative treatment undertaken. There is, of course, a personal slant on this but I was particularly impressed with the balanced consideration, including advantages and disadvantages, given to alternative methods of management in each section.

This book will be of interest and value to the trainee spinal surgeon and the experienced clinician. Many books are described as difficult to put down. This one is easy to pick up, and a pleasure to do so. If you have any involvement in spinal surgery I would strongly urge you to add *MASTERCASES: Spine Surgery* to your 'desert island list'.

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