

BOOK REVIEWS

SYMPOSIUM ON THE NEUROLOGIC ASPECTS OF PLASTIC SURGERY. Edited by SIMON FREDERICKS and GARRY S. BRODY. Pp. xv+328, with 344 illustrations. (St Louis: C. V. Mosby Company, 1978.) Price £34.

This is the published proceedings of the Seventeenth Symposium organised by the Education Foundation of the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons which took place in 1977. Most of the many contributors are plastic surgeons from North America but other disciplines are well represented, notably orthopaedics, ear, nose and throat surgery and neurosurgery. There are also contributions from 4 European experts.

The volume is divided into 5 sections and as one might expect from the title there is wide coverage given to various aspects of peripheral nerve surgery which is dealt with in the first 2 parts. One is devoted to neurophysiology and sensation, the other to motor nerve injuries, pain and reflex dystrophy. The third section entitled "Upper motor neurone and congenital muscular disorders", a potpourri of chapters covering aspects of upper limb surgery in hemiplegia, tetraplegia and cerebral palsy; spina bifida; arthrogryphosis and the treatment of drooling. The fourth section, on paraplegia, deals mainly with pressure sores but also discusses the general management and control of spasticity in spinal injuries. The last section is devoted to paralysis of the seventh nerve.

Much of the ground in this volume has been covered both in broad specialist surgical texts and more widely in highly selective volumes on single topics such as peripheral nerve injury and facial palsy. Indeed one may be excused for asking if another book is necessary especially in view of its high cost. However it covers the subject adequately and provides a good summary for those training in plastic surgery. Some sections will also be new and interesting to the well informed plastic surgeon, for example the intra-temporal repair of the facial nerve and the topics covered in part 3.

At the end of each section a few pages are devoted to a panel discussion. I expect that these were lively, informative sessions for those attending them but as is often the case they fall a little flat in print and understandably leave many questions unanswered.

The volume is a useful summary of neurological aspects of plastic surgery and indeed contains many useful references but those who are selective may well find most of the topics covered in the books and journals already on their shelves.

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SKIN GRAFTING. By ROSS RUDOLPH, JACK C. FISHER and JOHN L. NINNEMAN. Pp. xi+205 with 78 illustrations. (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1979.) Price £8.25.

At first glance this book from the Department of Plastic Surgery of the University of California, San Diego, appears a luxurious superfluity when one considers the innumerable articles and chapters in books that have been written on the basic principles of skin grafting. These early misgivings are heightened when one turns over page after page half-filled with endless illustrations of mechanical dermatomes, grafting knives and mesh expanders being prepared for use.

In spite of some rather quaint nomenclature such as a "stent" for a soft bolus tie-over dressing, and the repeated wrong use of the term débridement to describe no less than 4 ways of preparing a wound for skin grafting, the text is easy to read and covers a lot of ground considering that the authors are dealing only with split skin grafts and full-thickness grafts.

The lay-out of the chapters could be improved and indeed some are hardly worthy of the name. For instance, the chapter on "Why do skin grafts fail?" covers barely 2 pages and consists of 2 paragraphs of text and one Table. The section on "Experimental skin grafting in animals" is regrettably short and could have been expanded now that so many plastic (and general) surgeons are becoming involved in surgical laboratory work whether they like it or not.

There are many accepted and some controversial statements that could provide ideal debating subjects for any round table discussion. For instance "in most cases a split-thickness graft donor site is redressed on the first post-operative day" (p. 133) and once the inner dressing layer is exposed "the gentle use of a heat lamp is recommended".

Despite these criticisms, the book is worth looking at and perhaps comparing with that earlier classic by Brown and McDowell published in 1943.

The bibliography with its list of 278 references is useful with few significant omissions and in itself is a good reason for including this book in a medical library. The other good reason is its low price by current transatlantic standards.

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