

Cancer of the Face and Mouth. By Ian A. McGregor and Frances M. McGregor. Pp. vi+615 with 585 figures. (Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York: Churchill Livingstone, 1986). Price £90.

The teaching of Ian McGregor, who is the most distinguished exponent of the management of head and neck cancer in Britain, has always been characterised by its clarity, its astringent wit and the depth of understanding he shows about the relationship between treatment and underlying pathology. It is no coincidence that his wife is, in her own right, a pathologist of great authority and this book is the result of the fruitful collaboration between them. The name has been carefully chosen; the book is based on personal experience and, as well as face and mouth, covers the management of the scalp, nasal cavity and sinuses, salivary glands and, of course, neck dissection; it does not include the pharynx, larynx, thyroid and parathyroids.

Throughout, emphasis is placed on relating excisional surgery to the pathology of the lesion being treated and the descriptions of pathology stress aspects of surgical relevance. As one would expect, the sections on reconstructive techniques are authoritative, comprehensive and up to date and demonstrate why only surgeons who are trained in these techniques should be doing this type of surgery. The book is illustrated with excellent black and white photographs and drawings, by Ian Ramsden, of a very high standard. There is a carefully chosen reference list at the end of each chapter.

Review copies of many books pass across an editor's desk; unfortunately, few add anything significant to the scientific literature. This one does. It is the distillation of a lifetime's work of two of the foremost authorities on head and neck cancer and while it is strongly marked with the surgeon's preferences, it presents the whole spectrum of current practice. It can be recommended without reservation and will be the standard work on cancer in this area for many years to come.

A. C. H. WATSON

Notes on our Reviewers

- Bruce N. Bailey, FRCS**, Senior Consultant Plastic Surgeon, Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Aylesbury, Bucks.
U. Chetty, FRCS(Ed), Senior Lecturer, University Department of Clinical Surgery, Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh.
John Colville, FRCSEd, Consultant Plastic Surgeon, The Ulster Hospital, Belfast.
D. H. Harrison, FRCS, Consultant Plastic Surgeon, Mount Vernon Hospital, Northwood, Middlesex.
R. W. Pigott, FRCS, FRCSI, Consultant Plastic Surgeon, Frenchay Hospital, Bristol.
Colin R. Rayner, MS, FRCS, FRCSEd, Consultant Plastic Surgeon, Woodend General Hospital, Aberdeen.

Videotape Review

An increasing number of videotapes are offered for sale illustrating techniques of interest to the Plastic Surgeon. Good ones can be of great value as teaching aids and it seems as appropriate to review them as to review books. This is the first of an occasional series.

Radical Neck Dissection. J. Meirion Thomas. The Royal Society of Medicine, MacMillan Medical Video Productions. Running time approximately 25 minutes. Price £110+VAT.

This is a professionally produced videotape showing the personal technique of an experienced surgeon operating on a single patient. After a brief initial description of the patient simple animation is skilfully used to clarify the choice of skin flaps and the operation commences.

Mr Thomas uses scissor dissection and displays the anatomy of the neck with great clarity. He makes much of the importance of dissecting on a plane deep to the prevertebral fascia, but many surgeons would take issue with him for insisting, in a

teaching tape, on something which greatly increases the risks of injury to the brachial plexus and phrenic nerve without clear evidence that it reduces the chance of tumour recurrence.

It is obviously impossible to show the whole operation in 25 minutes but a little time could profitably have been spent on a demonstration of the correct positioning of the patient. It is disappointing that there is no mention of how to safeguard the cervico-mandibular branches of the facial nerve and it would have been more useful to the trainee to be shown how to find structures such as the thoracic duct and lingual nerve rather than to see them displayed, fully dissected. The unique potential of a teaching videotape is that it can let the student see how a master surgeon negotiates some of the trickiest steps of an operation. Time could perhaps have been made to include more of these by omitting some of the rather repetitive displays of the fully dissected anatomy which can be equally well found in textbooks.

Every experienced surgeon has developed his own variations in carrying out a neck dissection and this is a beautifully produced tape showing the technique of a very skilled surgeon. In spite of the defects in editing, it would be useful preparation for assisting at the operation but it would be of greater value if used as the introduction to a discussion in which points can be elaborated and clarified and alternative approaches aired.

Used in such a way, this tape would be an excellent aid to teaching.

A. C. H. WATSON