

Illustrated Atlas of Cutaneous Surgery. By Jessica L. Fewkes, Mack L. Cheney and Sheldon V. Pollack. (Philadelphia, JB Lippincott Company, New York, London, Gower Medical Publishing, 1992). Pp. xiv + 404, ill. ISBN 0-397-44676-4. Price \$95.

This work 'attempts to be a thorough yet concise visual atlas of cutaneous surgery'. Approximately 500 pages long, it is certainly lavishly illustrated and the photography and line drawings are excellent. It aims at all levels of expertise, from the beginner to the advanced practitioner. The first half deals with basic techniques and the second with more advanced techniques and applications, from the action of local anaesthetic at one end, to auricular reconstruction and the use of cultured keratinocytes at the other. In common with many other texts on 'dermatologic surgery', the further reading sections pay little attention to the plastic surgical literature, but rather commend their own.

It is not aimed at plastic surgeons as such, and I would advise the trainee not to look to this atlas for instruction on surgical techniques. The choice of technique is idiosyncratic, with, for instance, the use of a flap where direct closure would have been preferable. The use of cultured keratinocytes is illustrated in a case where an eminently graftable surface exists in the temple; we are shown the healed area after 10 weeks – a long time to wait for the poor quality scar. The 'cutaneous' surgeon is cautioned on another page against the use of the holus tieover dressing when grafting the hypopharynx or oral cavity, and this reviewer wonders what a cutaneous surgeon would be doing there at all.

The areas where this book is of greater interest are those covering techniques that many of us may use infrequently, for example electrosurgery, sclerotherapy, and hair transplantation. However, despite the illustrations one has to wonder how reliable these are given the idiosyncratic and, at times, inappropriate suggestions in the more surgical sections. Altogether this book cannot be recommended.

J. G. BOORMAN

1991 and 1992 Yearbooks of Plastic, Reconstructive, and Aesthetic Surgery. Edited by S. H. Miller. St. Louis, Mosby Year Book, Inc. Price \$59.95 U.S. and \$64 Foreign. Pp. xiii + 326, xiv + 322, ill. ISBN 0-8151-6038-0 and 0-8151-6039-9.

Digesting the plethora of journals which crowd our departmental library shelves seems to become ever more difficult with management and audit demanding more of our time. I am sure that many of us find comfort in the presence of the annual 'paper digests' which sit neatly on the same shelves, produced, in the publisher's words "as a unique and economical way to review the most important literature published in medical journals worldwide." But does this series really fulfil that aim, and justify the expense year by year? I suspect that there is something of the list-collector in all of us, reflecting an innate desire to see order from chaos. In pulling together articles on all aspects of plastic surgery from many journals (63 in 1991, 51 in 1992, reflecting an undoubtedly improved selectivity in the later volume) and cataloguing them by subject, these books present an appealing concept. To the credit of the books, each will certainly contain a paper or two from some obscure journal that will have been missed by all but the most voracious reader.

How much does that really matter? When the chips are down in a busy practice, does the possession of a yearly collection of selected publication abstracts serve to keep the clinician abreast of all that is important, in minimum time? After a rather protracted 'road test' over the past year, I regrettably consign this form of literature to the value of Christmas anthologies on whatever subject one might consider, accumulating dust from New Year's Day onwards. On initial viewing, I enjoyed a casual browse through the very selective collection, being reminded of familiar publications of two years previously (the approximate 'delay' time) and finding several interesting new papers from non plastic surgery journals. However, I am sure that the discipline of having to review the books led me to read a good deal more than I otherwise would have, and since that time I have rarely felt inclined to open them again. They sit, like the previous decade's volumes, neatly in line on the library shelf, comforting in their existence and very rarely exhumed. Why is this?

Firstly, the format of the books is average, although efforts have been made in 1991 to increase the invited comments (and occasionally, original author feedback), and in 1992 to structure the abstracts beneath easily identified headings, thereby greatly improving digestibility. Regardless of this, the need to compress as much material as possible into a cheaply priced book leads to a cluttered and 'busy' appearance, with illustrations suffering from size reduction and reproduction.

Secondly, the inevitable need to be selective means that even if every word of the book were read, the overview of one year's publications is totally governed by the editor's choice. I would find it significantly more useful if there was at least a list of other, non-abstracted publications placed at the end of each chapter. That would serve to place the selection in a more objective context.

Finally, the superficial survey function of such a book falls into an ineffectual void between being a catalogue and the depth of detail required to make it a useful reference source. In many of the abstracts, I found the compression of data too great to be useful clinically, and no substitute for what only a more regular reading of the journals can give.

In summary, although the books are satisfactorily produced, and cost about the price of one journal subscription, they do not figure highly on my priority list for library acquisitions. I do not believe that they adequately obviate the need for trainees to read comprehensively, or take the place of a regular skim through the core plastic surgery journals for busy clinicians. I am sure however that beleaguered colleagues in outposts with inadequate journal stocks would benefit greatly from these overviews, which might then be of inestimable value.

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Fundamentals of Orthognathic Surgery. By Malcolm Harris and Ian R. Reynolds. (London, Philadelphia, WB Saunders Company, 1991). ISBN 0-7020-1511-3. Pp x + 264, ill. Price £25.00.

This book is primarily intended as a basic manual of orthognathic surgery for postgraduate students, surgical and orthodontic trainees. The authors, a professor of maxillofacial surgery and oral medicine and an orthodontist (now sadly deceased), are eminently well qualified to provide a detailed insight into diagnosis, planning and surgical technique. It is a soft cover production of 250 pages, profusely illustrated with black and white photographs, line drawings and diagrams, which is well set out in a logical sequence. The first quarter covers general assessment of the patient, surgical planning and orthodontics. The basics of facial proportion (and disproportion) are well covered, together with the construction and use of study models and photographic montage. The mysteries of cephalometrics are explained in an understandable manner together with an outline of the scope and techniques of orthodontics. The chapter on fixation is very detailed and describes well the application of internal and external methods, the use of bite wafers and indications for intermaxillary fixation. All basic orthognathic surgical procedures are clearly described and illustrated to include useful advice on general patient management in the peri-operative period. Unfortunately there is no discussion or description of cranial bone grafts at all, which must be regarded as a serious omission, perhaps to be corrected in a later edition. The latter chapters are devoted to specific clinical problems and their solutions, including secondary cleft lip and palate defects and alveolar bone grafting. There are numerous clinical examples to aid the reader's understanding. The bibliography is limited but at £25 the book represents excellent value. There is, necessarily, an enormous amount of information packed into a limited space and so it cannot be regarded as easy reading, but it should be highly recommended to trainees in plastic surgery to gain an understanding of the fundamentals of a subject which should be an essential part of their educational program.

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