

Recent Advances in Plastic Surgery 4. Edited by Ian T. Jackson and Brian C. Sommerlad. Edinburgh, Churchill Livingstone, 1992. ISBN 0-443-04453-8. Pp xii + 200, ill. Price £39.95.

The *Recent Advances* series of publications has a distinguished record in a number of specialties, and many contemporary British surgeons will recall the value of the early general surgical editions in smoothing the passage through final Fellowship examinations. The first three *Recent Advances in Plastic Surgery* were no exception, succinctly surveying the revolutionary developments in the specialty over the past two decades with a consistently interesting and authoritative approach. The pace of change in the subject has inevitably slowed somewhat, and the emphasis altered to a perhaps more thorough scientific evaluation of new ideas. One could be forgiven for wondering whether the fourth survey of recent advances would be as gripping a read as its predecessors, but within ten minutes of opening this book, my fears were thoroughly dismissed. The editors have again steered a difficult course through the publications and controversies of the last 6-7 years in plastic surgery, and produced a valuable reference work as well as a five star 'good read' for anyone interested in the specialty.

The spectrum of subject matter is wide, embracing virtually every sub-specialty except Burns (on which a chapter covering allograft and cell culture work might not have gone amiss), with reviews carefully pitched to remain accessible to the generalist and yet comprehensive for the reference shelf.

There are two notable introductions to the book's format. The first is the use of 'twin' commentaries on a subject; that on Mohs's chemosurgery being used to provide a 'for and against' discussion. In the case of the two commentaries on Furlow's palate repair, both are united in advocating the technique, which I feel is far less valuable than the controversial approach. The second innovation is the final chapter inviting the editors of the two leading Plastic Surgery journals to select the most significant papers from a five year period. Both these innovations are successful, and will hopefully be repeated.

The remaining chapters are very 'clinician friendly', ranging from Sharpe and Coleman's eminently practical experience in tissue expansion to Jackson's exhaustive review of the variety of uses of calvarial bone. Keller's chapter on jaw reconstruction presents some qualitative advances in this area that are unrelated to free flap techniques and should be mandatory reading for all head and neck surgical trainees. Venkatswami's chapter on microsurgery in developing countries was the single disappointment to me. He presents techniques which are commonplace with comments on the different range of pathology, but fails to address the specific technical variations that are necessary if microsurgical tissue transfer is to achieve its enormous potential in the majority of developing countries which are less well equipped than India. Reference to Ashok Govila's interesting work on extracorporeal pedicles and other innovative methods would have been preferable.

The quality of the book is excellent, following Churchill Livingstone's consistent line diagram style and careful black and white photographic quality. This book should be read by all trainees, and is entertaining and concise enough to demand the attention of the most preoccupied senior surgeon. It is essential departmental library stock, and is good value at the price shown.

T. E. E. GOODACRE

The Operative Note. Collected Editorials. By Robert M. Goldwyn. New York, Thieme Medical Publishers, Inc., 1992. ISBN 0-86577-398-X. Price \$35. Pp xii + 212.

This is a delightful book.

Robert Goldwyn is the present editor of *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, a scholar, a self-confessed lover of life's riches including reading, writing and plastic surgery. In this anthology of 78 (not as the blurb says 'all') of his Editorials for various journals over the past 20 years, he writes of these loves with skill, wit, wisdom and gentle provocation. He writes to be read, with friendly force, as a close colleague talks over the port. He requires to be heard for our patients' sake.

After an introduction in which he bares his soul, essays are grouped under five headings; each with a preface. He meditates on every contentious aspect of our specialty. Who, what, where, when

and how are we or should we be? Education, practice, research, problem patients, litigation, remuneration, bureaucracy (let no-one think that grass is greener on the other side of the pond), plagiarism, intellectual dishonesty, past heroes, the future, are amongst his legion topics.

The last invaluable group concerns writing and editing and would help anyone proposing to write for any medical journal. He explains the mechanism and philosophy of editing P.R.S. and pleads, like the late Richard Asher, to whom he pays tribute, for clearer, more concise and more honest writing.

An essay entitled 'The Medical Book Review' clarifies my present duty. To answer his questions: what is the book about? The meaning of life for a plastic surgeon. Has it been well written? None better. Without overlap? Well, there is occasional repetition of both theme and phrases, more leitmotif than dull. What of the illustrations? Bountiful, but without drawings or photographs, as radio is superior to television. Are the references pertinent and up-to-date? Yes. What of the paper (pleasant) the print (clear) the binding (slim hardback). How does the book compare with others on the same subject? I cannot tell for I know no others. I do have an unfashionable love of anthologies and shall cherish this one. Who should buy it? Everyone with a love of sparkling prose and any interest in medicine. Is the price right? \$35 will presumably become £35. Even that would be well worth it, but don't tell Thieme.

There is a list of acknowledgements giving full references for each essay, but no index. This is a sadness, especially as Editorials are not indexed in P.R.S. It would add greatly to the value if it were professionally cross indexed and I hope this will be done for both the second edition and volume.

Thank you, gentle editor.

J. LENDRUM

Lasers in Plastic Surgery and Dermatology. Eds Bruce M. Achauer, Victoria M. Vander Kam and Michael W. Berns. (New York, Thieme Medical Publishers, Inc., 1992). ISBN 0-86577-426-9. Pp xvi + 206, ill. Price \$89.00.

The first editor of this book, Bruce M. Achauer, is Chief of Plastic Surgery at Irvine Medical Centre, Orange, California. The co-editors are a nurse and a scientist.

The text is well organised. The first two and last four chapters cover general aspects of laser medicine and the remaining thirteen chapters deal with laser management of specific conditions. The editors emphasise the fact that the long list of laser uses does not necessarily mean that laser is the treatment of choice and, in fact, many of the conditions listed can be treated as efficiently and with less expense by traditional techniques.

The first chapter on laser physics and laser tissue interaction is very well written and could be good reading to most trainees in plastic surgery. The laser systems used in plastic surgery and dermatology are discussed in chapter two. This part of the book would clarify a lot of the existing confusion about laser technology. It highlights the fact that the most expensive machine would not cater for all conditions that are potentially treatable by laser. The following thirteen chapters deal with benign skin lesions, premalignant and malignant skin lesions, vascular malformations, haemangiomas, telangiectasia, pigmented lesions, mucous membrane conditions, viral conditions, nail disorders as well as scars and tattoos. The views presented in these chapters are fairly well balanced. The illustrations, some in colour, are of fair to good standard but unfortunately the three cases showing the effect of laser treatment on portwine stains appear to have their postoperative photos overexposed.

I would consider this book good value for money and I would recommend it for individuals involved in laser counselling or treatment and as an essential reference in a plastic surgical library.

A. A. QUABA

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