Book reviews


The first edition of this book was published 15 years ago and the authors’ experience spans the development of paediatric cardiology as a specialty in its own right. Apparent in every page of the 3rd edition is the enjoyment and enthusiasm still felt for this rapidly developing, fascinating subject.

The book is written from a clinical viewpoint. Emphasis is on clinical assessment including ECG, chest x-ray, and VCG, and management based on experience and current practice at the Boston Children’s Hospital. Detailed angiographic descriptions and illustrations are not included. As stated in the preface, there are advantages in a book that gives one way of managing congenital heart disease over one that is a multi-author reference book. The disadvantage is that limitations in the approach may be perpetuated.

In the last few years the Van Praagh’s have worked in Boston. Their anatomical and developmental concepts, especially in relation to common ventricle, transposition of the great vessels, cor triatriatum, and tetralogy of Fallot have profoundly influenced thinking about these conditions. Nadas and Fyler, as they state, have interpreted the Van Praagh’s concepts as they see them.

The section of ‘General principles’ of congenital heart disease neatly summarizes the notion of sequential chamber localization, the importance of d- and l-bulboventricular looping, and the differential conal growth hypothesis, while in Chapter 17, ‘The transpositions’, possible variants are given in as painless a way as possible—they work out to be 32! The section on double outlet right ventricle, however, is not so clear, and the physiological and clinical sequelae dependent principally on presence or absence of pulmonary stenosis are difficult to extract from the text. The authors also talk about the Taussig-Bing syndrome (different from anomy) without defining what they mean.

Omissions in such a personal book are inevitable, but for the non-specialist these are few. None the less, His bundle electrocardiography, at least in relation to heart block, deserves a mention. Therapeutic suggestions for congenital block (‘chlorothiazide to achieve a low total body potassium’) are somewhat speculative, but the authors’ admonition that all patients with surgically created heart block require pacing is salutary.

Some of the physiological explanations are superficial, but this was not the prime purpose of the book and in a clinical context the book stands as a masterpiece of description. Rhetoric at times intrudes. One could, albeit admiringly, take exception to a description of double outlet right ventricle as ‘this embryologically fascinating, clinically frustrating and surgically devastating malformation’, but one just has to read on when squatting in tetralogy of Fallot is described as ‘a socially unacceptable position’.


The intention of the author is to discuss the biological principles of orthopaedic surgery, the dynamics of trauma, and the rationale for surgical intervention. This he has done in a large 2-volume work with a bibliography of nearly 6,000 references, up to 1971. He has succeeded in the greater part of his intention.

With all of such an extensive work written by one author there is a pleasing uniformity of presentation and little duplication. However, the style of writing does not make for easy reading, and this work is essentially one for reference. Certainly no orthopaedic surgeon or paediatrician could read this work without learning much.

It shows the usual difference in emphasis between orthopaedic practice on the two sides of the Atlantic, with a much greater emphasis being placed on the operative aspects of the discipline. This leads, as in the section on popliteal cysts, to a failure to consider the natural history of the condition, and in the section on cerebral palsy comparatively little is written on non-operative methods of management favoured in many centres in this country. It also leads to beautifully illustrated detailed sections on operative surgery for many conditions which have added appreciably to the price of the volume, but which many private purchasers of this type of book might prefer to find grouped in a separate volume.

There is a good section on fractures, but the author has decided that a separate volume is required for the presentation of orthotics, prosthetics, and hand surgery.

The general presentation is of a high order and the total effect left on the reviewer is one of great admiration for the industry of the author and publishers and for a notable addition to orthopaedic literature. It is the best book for reference known to the reviewer, but it is to be hoped that later editions will reconsider the objectives of the work. At the moment it is too orientated to surgery for paediatricians, and incomplete for surgeons.


This book is based on the author’s personal experience