
This is a book that will sit well on the coffee table especially in spring as the cover is colourful and eye catching. Unfortunately, the contents are not quite so interesting. It sets out to cover what is not normally called 'minimal access surgery' in gastrointestinal cancer. It does not keep entirely to its brief, however, as there is a chapter on 'Physiological Responses and Advantages of Minimally Invasive Surgery', which could be found in any minimal access surgical textbook and has nothing really to do with gastrointestinal cancer. Likewise, the following chapter on 'Instruments', is probably unnecessary in such a specialised textbook. Everyone should know what instruments to use if they are going to embark upon what is really a super specialised part of minimal access surgery.

The layout in double columns at first looks quite pleasing but is actually difficult to digest and I am sure will make readers cross eyed should they wish to read this book for long periods. The illustrations in the main, however, are excellent and in those chapters that have colour photographs, these are good apart from the rather blue ones on the chapter on liver surgery.

I enjoyed immensely the opening chapter, which sets the scene for this textbook. Unfortunately, the textbook then strays somewhat until the sensible chapter by Philippe Mouret on 'General Diagnostic Aspects'. There are one or two excellent chapters, especially part one on liver cancer 'Assessment of Liver Tumours' by Frederick Greene and the very clear part one of the chapter on pancreatic cancer 'Assessment of Pancreatic Cancers' by John and Garden.

As with all multiple author books, there is obviously some repetition though the editors have done well to keep this to a minimum. The best chapter in the book for its clarity, excellent illustrations, and the fact that the chapter has actually put in full results is the chapter on 'Endo-Rectal Surgery for Early Rectal Cancer' by Said and Buss.

I wondered why there were comments about instruments for hernia repair and discussion about using the USA for dissecting the gall bladder. I have never seen a malignant hernia and gall bladder cancer is rare. Usually this is unrecognised until the gall bladder has been removed. While discussing this, it is interesting that there is little made about extraction devices and the use of bags. I would have thought that this deserved a full chapter. The other glaring omission is that there is no chapter on port site recurrences or indeed local recurrences. The effect of carbon dioxide, the laser plume, and diathermy for the spread of malignant cells should have been considered in such a specialised textbook. It would also have been interesting to have read about the increasing incidence of port site and local recurrences.

There are some smaller omissions in each of the results. There is no mention of flow ultrasonography in the chapter on the liver. In the pancreatic chapter, laparoscopic Whipple’s procedure is not mentioned although this has been performed and yet laparoscopic semi-hepatectomy was mentioned although no figures or results are given for this procedure. In the chapter on splenectomy, there is no mention as to whether embolisation is ever used.

Finally, there is a chapter on training and once again, I think this chapter is misplaced as by the time this specialised book is read, surgeons should be fully trained and if they are not, this could be extremely dangerous. The chapter on the future is interesting but probably more should be made of the role of minimally invasive surgery for targeted chemotherapy and other forms of cancer treatment.

The book ought to be in surgical libraries for reference but I am unsure as to its real place. It is neither an operative manual nor a reference manual with little in the way of results. The potential is there certainly and I think the second edition may be greatly improved in this new developing type of surgery within the surgical oncological scene.

R D ROSIN


The editors of this book have set themselves the task of designing a volume to deal with the virology, epidemiology, diagnosis, pathology, treatment, and prevention of disease associated with viral hepatitis. This is a rapidly developing area particularly in respect of hepatitis C. There were, for example, more than 1000 publications on hepatitis C in 1993, and there have been 300 new citations since the publication of this book. Although the bibliographies are comprehensive, there are few citations from 1993 and thus a large proportion of the recent publications on this subject are not reviewed. In an attempt to overcome this, each chapter is provided with an update section to permit addition of the most recent publications in the field. These are of essence, however, patchy.

Two specific additions that could be made come to mind, namely, a chapter dealing with other viruses that can be of clinical significance in liver disease such as cytomegalovirus, Epstein-Barr virus, herpes simplex, etc, and secondly, a chapter devoted to interactions between the different hepatitis viruses. This is very much an overlooked area, which is particularly important in the clinical treatment of patients. Having made these obvious criticisms, however, it is also true to say that the book provides a good overview of the subject and will be in demand as a reference work in most well stocked libraries.

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NOTES

Perspectives in Clinical Trials

The Second European Conference on Medicines Research will be held in Brussels on 5–6 December 1994. Further information from Janie Wardle, PO Box 806, Cambridge CB4 4RT. Tel: +44 (0) 954 252516; fax: +44 (0) 954 252517.

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