Interlocking nailing

By D. D. Tanna

Pp. 232. New Delhi: Jaypee Brothers Medical Publishing. 2004. ISBN: 8-18061-227-9. £50.

A modern textbook should be readable, informative and affordable, especially when targeted at the developing world. This book fulfils these criteria and is therefore suitable to be kept as a handbook for all practising orthopaedic and trauma surgeons who, like Dr Tanna, face great economic difficulties.

This book is an accumulation of personal experience gained during a surgical lifetime by a senior orthopaedic surgeon in Mumbai. He explains many procedures which are relevant and unique to the working environment in the developing world, where we often have to adapt the standard procedure and practice to suit the local circumstances.

Although the scientific information discussed has not been supported by proper references, this book is informative in many aspects of the evolution of interlocking nails and the techniques of extraction. The photo gallery and the accompanying CD-ROM of implant removal (a Powerpoint presentation) are especially valuable. The illustrated chapters of nailing without the help of the C-arm, of implant removal and what we have not been taught in workshops, have addressed many valid points. These chapters provide many useful tips for the general orthopaedic trauma surgeon and trainee.

R. K. Shah

Fractures of the tibial pilon

By P. Bartolozzi and F. Lavini

Pp. 140. Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2004. ISBN: 8-84700-248-6. £46.

Fractures of the tibial pilon are among the most difficult and poorly understood injuries that present to accident departments.

Regardless of the method of treatment, the outcome tends to be unpredictable and is frequently disappointing for the patient and surgeon alike. Management techniques usually depend on the experience of the treating surgeons; there is no consensus as to whether any particular fracture pattern does better or worse with any particular intervention.

This publication is welcome, bringing together exponents of the variety of investigation and management techniques that are employed around the world, and offering position statements on the best that each has to offer. Rather than being a book of commissioned chapters, however, this is a collection of summaries from presentations made at a meeting on pilon fractures held in Italy in 2002. As such the reader is presented with insights into the best evidence available, but even with editorial moderation there is unavoidable repetition of information that each speaker has felt obliged to include for completeness of their own presentation. It is easier to negotiate the style if read as an account of "proceedings" rather than a text book.

Some chapters are more useful than others, the radiology section, for example, being a general description of imaging of tibiotalar trauma rather than a focused consideration of specific techniques used in plafond fractures, such as CT. The use of imaging as a guide to surgical approaches is not even mentioned.

The book concludes with a consensus view from the meeting on how, both open and closed, type C pilon fractures should be treated. However, the evidence is flimsy. Indeed, of 229 references used in the book, 45% of them are from the 1980s or earlier, and only 38% from publications within a decade of the meeting.

The main omission from this text is a consideration of what we do not know. There is much information about the blood supply to the skin over the distal tibia, the dictation of surgical approaches by soft-tissue status and outcomes of current interventions that is not covered. I, therefore, see this as a book that should be available for borrowing, but it does not merit a place in the personal collection of those who do not have a specific research interest in the subject.

D. Limb