Review of hand surgery

Edited by P. K. Beredjikian and D. J. Bozentka.

Pp 275. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 2004. ISBN: 0-7216-0188-X. £45.

This is an outstanding short review of hand surgery. Each section is written in note form and covers the main points of clinical relevance in a clear and concise manner. The book would be ideal, even essential, for candidates preparing for forthcoming intercollegiate board exams. It also provides adequate information for a more junior surgeon wishing to gain a grasp of hand surgery in the course of a clinical rotation.

M. Hayton

Vertebral metastases

Edited by V. Pointillart, A. Ravaud and J. Palussiere.

Pp 320. UK: Springer-Verlag, 2002. ISBN: 2-28759-752-2. £104.

This is a comprehensive text that highlights the value of a multi-disciplinary approach for the treatment of vertebral metastases. Despite its small size (320 pages) it contains a wealth of information. The early chapters outline the pathophysiology and characteristics of spinal osseous invasion. The presenting symptoms and clinical features are well covered, together with the modern diagnostic methods of identifying and staging disease.

The treatment of spinal metastases arising from specific primary tumours is then detailed in individual short chapters. Almost half of the rest of the book is given over to technical details of treatment. The authors describe the full gamut of surgical approaches and techniques that have evolved during the last 15 years. Conventional open and thoracoscopic techniques are summarised, together with succinct accounts of the nursing, anaesthetic and rehabilitation needs of these patients. Recent developments such as vertebroplasty and bisphosphonate therapy are also included.

In reading this book, one is impressed by the writers' evident humane and holistic attitude to management of these patients. The very parochial list of contributors from Bordeaux has not restricted the appeal of this book: rather the reverse, as there is a uniformity of philosophy borne of close clinical collaboration. Refinement of indications for surgery, its appropriate timing and that of adjuvant treatment have all been better defined and comprehensively reviewed in this book. By contrast to the nihilism associated with the earlier results of decompressive laminectomies, this multidisciplinary approach has yielded vastly better outcomes, which are outlined in the last chapters. The evidence

upon which to base this renewed optimism is explored in a useful critical bibliography.

This is not a 'how-to-do-it' book. It is a valuable reference source that should act as a primer for all involved in treatment of spinal metastatic disease. It is also a useful update for experienced clinicians in this field who wish to familiarise themselves with other aspects of care.

M. Grevitt

Paediatric fractures and dislocations

By L. von Laer.

Pp 528. Stuttgart: Thieme, 2004. ISBN: 1-58890-260-9. \$129.

Dr von Laer is a man with a mission. Has he achieved it? Perhaps, as there have been four editions of the book in German over a period of almost 20 years. This is the first edition in English. Can it cross the cultural barrier he feels exists? I think not. Almost 100 pages are dedicated to the standard generalities of fractures; healing, remodelling and patterns of injury. When he comes to patient care, the advice on parent management and the inclusion of cartoons invites comparison with Mercer Rang but neither the advice nor the cartoons are as pithy. The remaining 400 or so pages are taken up with a review of management of fractures. At the beginning of each section is a summary with highlighted boxes. These are too detailed and so the bullet points lose their importance.

Some of the management he advocates is very different from what is considered mainstream in the English-speaking world. If we examine in detail one fracture – supracondylar of the humerus, we find that he advocates emergency reduction of displaced fractures, open reduction where there is a complete nerve palsy, and delay in manipulation for two to four days where there is swelling (to allow immobilisation in flexion). This contrasts with our decision to delay treatment overnight and then to attempt a closed reduction. Prolonged delay would be uncommon. He reports 13% ulnar nerve palsy with the use of crossed Kirschner wires and the same percentage for varus deformities – much higher figures than we are accustomed to. Owing to the high incidence of complications, he advocates the use of an external fixator.

Most of the translation is satisfactory, although often a little long-winded. There are some gems for example, regarding tibial fractures in infants. "Simply put, the growing skeleton occasionally becomes fatigued from the unending strain of the toddler's proud and playful dancing".

This book does not compete with other standard texts such as Rockwood and Green. It is obviously the result of a huge amount of work and experience on the part of the author. Reading it might encourage an experienced children's orthopaedic surgeon to look afresh at his fracture practice.

G. Bennet