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## Book Reviews

### Cancer of the Head and Neck

Edited by E.N. Myers and J.Y. Suen. New York, Churchill Livingstone. Second edition, 1990, 1132 pp. ISBN 0 443 08597 8. £95.00.

THIS GREATLY expanded second edition is now almost too heavy to hold, and yet it succeeds only in covering the surgical side of head and neck cancer in any depth, and even that from the point of view of the ear, nose and throat (ENT) surgeon only. Therefore it may not appeal to others (e.g. radiotherapists) working in this field.

The book introduces evaluation, staging, radiology, pathology, medical, nutritional and anaesthetic issues, principles of radiation treatment, and dental and maxillofacial considerations. The middle of the book is devoted to a chapter for each site, such as the oral cavity. Finally there are chapters on reconstruction, rehabilitation of speech and swallowing, nursing care and emotional aspects.

One feature of the layout which I found useful was that each of the sections on cancer at individual sites follows more or less the same pattern of anatomy, pathology, investigations and treatment policy. One of the strong points of the book is its full and useful references. However, more data on epidemiology and aetiology would have been welcome in some places, especially in the chapter on laryngeal carcinoma.

I enjoyed reading the radiotherapy chapter: it was written in the language that a surgeon can understand and provided just the information I needed. The chapter on chemotherapy I found to be superficial, as it assumes a vast body of knowledge which most ENT surgeons do not have. Furthermore it tended to rely on small phase II trials rather than on larger phase III trials with control patients.

The chapter on tumours of the hypopharynx is particularly well balanced, and the author is to be congratulated on being one of the few who realises that replacement of the hypopharynx after resection of a tumour presents several different problems and there is no such thing as the "best method" of pharyngeal repair. He states that mortality after gastric transposition is approaching 10%—this is true, but not in the direction which he implies. The statement "irradiation alone produces few satisfactory results for cancer of the post cricoid area and cervical oesophagus" is out of date and untrue.

I was surprised to see no mention of the fundamental and highly important work of MacGregor and his colleagues on the anatomy and pathology of mouth cancer, and no reference to Kleinsasser in the section on microlaryngoscopy. It is hard to believe that the authors are unfamiliar with the work of these outstanding contemporary pioneers. Removal of nasopharyngeal angiofibromas via the Le Fort I osteotomy, much the best approach, was not mentioned.

The writing is often wordy, and at times difficult or impossible to understand; for example, the opening sentence of the book states "The study of head and neck cancers must correspond to

a double pre-occupation". Tautologies are scattered throughout (e.g. "therapeutic management"). The book would have been improved by firm editing.

Isolated references to the history of cancer of the head and neck would have been better omitted. The book repeats the incorrect claim that the first total laryngectomy was done by Dr Patrick Heron Watson in Edinburgh in 1866. This is of course untrue: Dr Watson's article shows that the only operation which the patient had was a tracheostomy. Fergusson's name is misspelt, the incision ascribed to him is incorrectly drawn and the modification ascribed to Dieffenbach is also wrong. Unless the author has read the original article he would be wise to eschew secondhand historical references, which are almost always incorrect. If the author clearly has not bothered to read some of the references he quotes, how are we to know whether he has read the others?

The colour plates at the beginning of the book are out of place, add nothing, and could have been omitted, presumably with some reduction in price. There are inevitably mistakes in a book of this size: for example, Fig. 19.1, describing the anatomy of the oropharynx, is incorrect. The book would have benefited from pruning of old-fashioned material; surely nobody still uses the forehead flap.

The most obvious omission from this book is the almost complete lack of any mention of tumour biology and all the exciting work that is currently being done on topics such as multidrug resistance, ploidy, cell kinetics and oncogenes.

Notwithstanding, I enjoyed reading this book and am happy to have it on my shelf.

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### Microsurgical Reconstruction of the Head and Neck

Edited by Shan D. Baker. New York, Churchill Livingstone. 1989, 356 pp. ISBN 0 443 085 870. £60.00

THE PLACE of microsurgery in the reconstruction of the head and neck is now well established. An ability to transfer a piece of tissue from one part of the body to another has revolutionised reconstruction for both patient and surgeon. Less frequent are the days of protracted inpatient stay now that a single-stage repair is possible.

Shan Baker has edited a splendid book in which seventeen eminent authors have contributed a chapter each. The volume starts with two chapters on microvascular technique and instrumentation. These chapters discuss the fundamental techniques, their applications, the problems and the difficulties.

The following chapters discuss a specific free flap in a methodical and comprehensive way. The layout of each chapter has been standardised and there are sections for anatomy, pre-operative assessment, postoperative care, indications, contra-indications and special considerations, accompanied by high-quality line drawings, photographs and one or two case studies. If each chapter lacks anything it is a section on complications. For every flap does have its limitations, such as bulk of the tissue transferred and quality of the skin.