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Book Review

Surgical Oncology, Current Concepts and Practice

C.S. McArdle.

Guildford, UK, Butterworth, 1990. 352 pp., £55.00. ISBN 0407017003.

WHEN FACING a new, small book on a vast subject, such as *Surgical Oncology, Current Concepts and Practice*, one immediately wonders which criteria the author has adopted to reduce to a little more than 300 pages the enormous amount of available data.

The answer becomes clear when reading the book, since the fifteen authors of the sixteen different chapters have made a constant effort to refer to the most authoritative studies or to the prospective trials, and the vast majority of quotations include papers published in the last decade.

As stated in the subtitle *Current Concepts and Practice*, the book covers in an excellent manner the essential concepts of specialist oncology and the rationale for clinical decision, without overlooking some practical operative details (such as the paragraph on biopsy in the chapter on bone and soft tissue tumours). What, in my view, differentiates this book from other similar efforts is the modern approach to the subject: in fact, besides the traditional layout by organ or system, there are excellent chapters dealing with the principles of cancer therapy and recent

advances in cancer research, and the traditional chapters contain valuable paragraphs on experimental models of cancer of the oesophagus, molecular biology of cancer of the stomach, screening and surveillance of colorectal cancer, meta-analysis of adjuvant systemic therapy in breast cancer and symptomatic treatment of advanced breast cancer. These subjects are frequently overlooked in similar books and provide the reader with updated information which is extremely useful to the surgeon who cannot extensively follow all the research in the field of his interest.

I think this book is particularly directed to those surgeons or oncologists who, although specialists in their branch, want to maintain an updated, overall view of the field of clinical oncology. There are inevitably some minor flaws: for instance there should be a chapter on cancer of the anus, the treatment of which is going through a changing multidisciplinary approach; and more space should be devoted, under the chapter on lymphomas, to the surgical therapy of the gastrointestinal localisation both in initial and advanced stages. Furthermore, in the chapter on surgical treatment of gastric cancer, it is stated that no randomised trial has tested the difference of total and subtotal gastrectomy in distal cancer of the stomach, while this type of study has already been published by the French Associations for Surgical Research.

In some chapters there is an overwhelming predominance of quotations from British literature, while the chapter on tumours of the head and neck is devoid of references.

These are, however, small defects which do not significantly affect the overall value of the work and which could be easily corrected in future editions. I think the book is very valid and will surely be easily and agreeably read by surgeons and oncologists. I am happy to keep it on my office desk.

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