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Book Reviews

Malignancies of the Vulva

Edited by P.G. Knapstein *et al.*

New York, Thieme Medical Publishers, 1991, 184 pp. ISBN 0-86577-389-0. DM 168.00.

THIS is a very well produced little book which is a series of essays by an international group addressing the subject of vulval malignancies. The editors have gone to a lot of trouble to choose an internationally known faculty and invited them to present their views on many aspects of the management of vulval disease.

At the beginning of the book the essays on pathology, the association of the disease with the papillomavirus infection, diagnosis and intraepithelial neoplasia fit well together and present balanced, well-illustrated views. Ng's chapter on diagnosis is comprehensive though the illustrations would be complemented by arrows directing the reader to the key histopathology features; this would be appreciated by the non-pathologists. The idea presented that verrucous carcinoma may develop 'aggressive behaviour' after radiotherapy is not sustained by any evidence. Gissmann, reviewing the possible role of papilloma virus infection, highlights the apparent importance of type 6 and 11, types not associated with cervical intraepithelial neoplasia and invasive cervical carcinoma. Nauth's chapter on early diagnosis has some beautiful colour photographs illustrating both the gross appearance and the cytology of the early pre-malignant and malignant lesions. The treatment of vulva intraepithelial disease by laser is well described and illustrated in Heinzl's chapter. Di Paola's chapter on intraepithelial disease is rather long and repetitive but pushes successfully the importance of the long natural history, the ability of the VIN (vulva intraepithelial neoplasia) lesions to regress and the lack of evidence of regular progression of VIN to invasive carcinoma.

DiSaia and Hacker separately review the surgical management of small (micro) carcinomas and lesions up to 2 cm (stage 1). They very properly are concerned about when groin dissection can be avoided either unilaterally or bilaterally and both support the case against Halstead type *en bloc*. Limited trials of the Gynaecological Oncology Group in the United States are reviewed by Homesley and the successful illustration of the postoperative pelvic radiotherapy in patients with advanced disease emerges from the most successful study to date.

The later chapters concerned with advanced disease include reviews on lymph node involvement, reconstructive procedures, primary surgical and combined radiotherapeutic/surgical approaches. They include the didactic experience of Monaghan and the personal experience of Boronow as well as very extensive, unusual radiotherapeutic experience from Germany of the role of this modality in the management of new primary disease as reviewed by Schrier *et al.*

Nine years ago, Stanley Way wrote a monograph on malignant disease of the vulva based on many years personal experience.

That book contains a whole chapter on the complications of treatment. The overlap between the different approaches to advanced carcinoma of the vulva in chapters 10 to 14 is potentially confusing to the inexperienced reader and the lack of a full discussion on the cause and management of the very real complications of the different approaches compounds the imbalance.

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The Radiotherapy of Malignant Disease (second edition)

Edited by R.C.S. Pointon.

London, Springer, 1991. 481 pp. ISBN 0 387 196226. DM 295.00.

THE ORIGINAL preface to the first edition pointed out that this book is aimed at the radiotherapist in training, a modest recommendation since the work of the Manchester School in Radiotherapy has for decades occupied pole position for radiotherapists keenly interested in the maintenance of technically high standards of treatment. Not all subscribe of course to the Manchester philosophy—high dose, restricted target volume, short overall treatment time, to put it in a nutshell—but few would seriously question the remarkable ability of successive teams at the Christie Hospital to deliver high quality care to a larger number of patients than any other European centre. Although this work is, strictly speaking, a second edition, it does of course follow on from the previous two text books from the same centre, published by Ralston Paterson in 1947 and 1963. Once again, the main aim is to discuss in detail how to treat, by X-rays, radium and other brachytherapy techniques, a wide range of malignant tumours at separate sites. As one would expect, the Manchester brachytherapy dosage system is fully outlined, with examples, and I was also pleased to see that the excellence of the Christie Hospital mould room is reflected in a detailed chapter containing much information which is not available elsewhere. Three of the most important areas where contributions from Manchester have been particularly notable are well laid out; skin (14 pages), head and neck sites (60 pages) and gynaecology (30 pages).

This is essentially a didactic outline of treatment rather than a discursive description of current controversies or potential areas of growth. One might feel that a chapter on principles of chemotherapy would fit uncomfortably into the whole, but Dr Wilkinson's contribution is valuable, though necessarily concise and unfortunately accompanied only by out of date references. Bibliography is never an easy decision for authors of a general text, but the decision by most authors (or more likely the editor) to avoid them altogether (as in most chapters) is not, in my view, a sensible one. Even if references were limited to