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BOOK REVIEW

Bailey & Love's Short Practice of Surgery, 25th Edition

Norman S. Williams, Christopher J.K. Bulstrode, P. Ronan O'Connell (Eds.). Hodder Arnold, 2008, Price £ 110.00, 1513 pp.

Since its first appearance in 1932, this textbook has become world famous and the present edition represents the silver jubilee. The book has increased in size and is now 1513 pages. The index itself, which is necessary in a book like this, covers 82 pages. With a few exceptions, the authors are from UK, and they are all well recognised, known for skills in teaching and communication. The book covers most aspects of surgery, and there are sections devoted to the underlying principles of surgical practice, investigation and diagnosis and preoperative care. These are followed by chapters covering all aspects of trauma. Furthermore, there are separate sections for elective orthopaedic surgery, surgery of the skin and subcutaneous tissue, head and neck, breast and endocrine, cardiothoracic and vascular, as well as abdominal, genito-urinary surgery and transplantation.

The quality of the printing is excellent and this book is well-known for its outstanding illustrations. This includes both photographs as well as schematic line drawings. Each chapter starts with learning objectives, and summary boxes placed in between the text and illustrations make the chapters easy to read. References for further reading are useful.

Modern techniques are well described, but not to the expense of the importance of clinical observation and the description of clinical signs. Biographical foot notes, anecdotes and historical figures complete the picture of an excellent textbook which is a pleasure to read. There are few objections or suggestions for improvement. However, the figures indicating Cushing's syndrome might perhaps be replaced. The illustration indicating measurement of ankle systolic blood pressure is actually showing blood pressure measurements of the leg. However, these are only minor details. The preface of the book indicates that it is "set out to produce a high quality comprehensive textbook to be enjoyed by undergraduates and postgraduates". Since specialisation is splitting up surgery, I think this book may also be of great value as a reference book in general surgery for a number of surgeons practicing mainly within a sub-speciality.

This book has a high pedagogic standard and I recommend it as one of the very best textbooks in general surgery.

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