Book Reviews

Procedures in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, edited by L.M. Vistnes. Pp. xvi + 748, illustrated. Little, Brown & Company, Boston, Toronto, London, 1991. Hardback £170.

The full title of this book *Procedures in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery: How They Do It* could be misleading for some. It is explained in the Preface by the editor that he has collated, amalgamated and updated some of the many articles called *How I do it* featured from time to time in the *Annals of Plastic Surgery* under his editorship into a single work. This book is the result.

Sixty-one authors have contributed to the 37 chapters which cover a broad spectrum of reconstructive and aesthetic surgery. The quality of virtually every chapter, as one would expect from the distinguished list of authors, is excellent. Most of these are from the USA but a small number from other countries have been included to provide an international flavour.

While it is not intended to be comprehensive, the book loses value from some obvious omissions. There is no chapter on abdominoplasty in the first section on aesthetic surgery. There is no mention of hypospadias in the second section on congenital problems. Finally, in the third section on acquired problems, there are only three chapters related to hand surgery while operations in head and neck reconstruction are limited to the two contributions on free flaps, each of which, incidentally, is excellent. There is also no mention of the treatment of pressure sores in this section.

The text in double columns is clear and easy to read. The quality of the multitude of photographic reproductions is excellent and the diagrams are good, although in a number of places, more of these, sometimes in place of photographs, would have been useful.

By its nature this book is not an important basic reference book for any personal or departmental library but at £170 is a luxury which will be much appreciated by any surgeon working in this speciality who can lay his hands on a copy.

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Barriers and Fluids of the Eye and Brain, edited by M.B. Segal. Pp. xxix + 219, illustrated. Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1992. Hardback £55.00.

This is a volume of short papers put together to honour Hugh Davson's eightieth birthday. Hugh Davson has had a distinguished career in the field of ocular physiology over the last 40 years, and not only established an international reputation for himself, but also created a unit and an ambience which trained many of the foremost ocular physiologists in the world today.

There are 20 papers in the volume, which cover a wide range of topics with more emphasis on the brain than the eye, the common theme being membrane transport and permeability. The papers are up-to-date and the editor has to be congratulated on the production of the book in such a short time after the meeting.

The topics that are covered reflect the interests of the writers, all of whom have been trained and/or influenced by Hugh Davson, and as such there is some disparity in the continuity of the narrative, particularly in relation to two papers on audiogenic seizures in small rodents.

The book is a very fitting tribute to Hugh Davson and reflects his interests admirably, but would be of limited value to those interested in physiological problems of eye and brain in depth.

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Asthma, P.J. Barnes. Pp. 255, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Tokyo, London, Melbourne, New York, Edinburgh, 1992. Hardback £33.00.

This book consists of 19 chapters, each written by one (or two) of the country's leading respiratory scientists and clinicians. References are given up to 1990, with a few in 1991 or 'in press', but frustratingly most of these do not give the name of the journal. Why not?

The first chapter, on the definition of asthma, avoids the usual dreary semantics, and presents the thinking clinician's approach to the diagnosis. Next come chapters on the epidemiology and pathology of asthma. There then follow 10 'scientific' chapters – half the book – about the immunology, pharmacology and cellular physiology of the free and fixed airway cells, smooth muscle, vasculature, plasma exudation and oedema, and neural mechanisms involved in asthma. (I read with a small glow of pride at this point, having been possibly the first person in this country to inhale nebulized VIP. A colleague stood by with a syringe of adrenaline, 'just in case you get anaphylaxis?' I didn't.) You will need to do your homework before you tackle these bits. There are a lot of abbreviations, not all of which are explained, and the authors have presumed the reader has a working knowledge of the techniques and materials used. For example: 'Human eosinophils, but not neutrophils, constitutively expressed $\alpha^4\beta^1$ (CD49d/CD29) i.e. VLA-4.' Each chapter has a summary, but these make the same presumptions. The book concludes with half a dozen more clinically orientated chapters, covering the advantages and disadvantages of bronchodilator therapy and other therapies, and what is new in occupational asthma and anti-inflammatory treatment.

This book stands on the merit of its 'scientific' chapters. The other chapters, good as they are, would not have induced me to buy the book by themselves, and clinically minded chest doctors would do better with a more clinically minded book. (Yes, there is one.) For the respiratory airway scientist, this book provides an up-to-date and comprehensive review written by the people who ought to have written it, and is good value for money.

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