
This is a successor to Coronary Heart Disease in Young Women, which appeared in 1978, also published by Churchill Livingstone, and edited by Professor Michael Oliver. Inevitably, conclusions about the causes of coronary heart disease in women largely depend on comparisons with data from the much larger number of studies on men. These figure prominently but usefully in what is a valuable collection of reviews on various aspects of coronary heart disease in general as well as on its determinants in women. The scene is set in an interesting and stimulating paper by Professor F.H. Epstein, who considers time trends and sex differences in coronary heart disease. Geographical variation in death rates from coronary heart disease is much more pronounced in men than in women. Rates have decreased uniformly in women, though not in men. No one really knows why. Dr. Joan Slack points out that if there is a genetic component of liability to death from coronary heart disease the risk to relatives of affected women will be greater than to those of affected men—a hypothesis that has been confirmed by family studies and studies of twins. There is little doubt as to the adverse effects of oral contraceptives on blood pressure and the risk of stroke or coronary heart disease. There are some of the clues discussed in early chapters. Later on, though, the unresolved question of the relationship of the menopause to coronary heart disease and the puzzling and conflicting results of studies of the relationship between post-menopausal oestrogen use and coronary heart disease are high-lighted. Atherosclerosis is probably more prevalent in men than women of the same age though not necessarily by enough to explain their different experience of clinically manifest coronary heart disease. In clinical studies, coronary arteriography in young women has shown surprisingly frequent cases of myocardial infarction not associated with coronary atherosclerosis which—to a personal view—points to the importance of considering mechanisms other than changes in the vessel wall. Professor Oliver concludes with four possible explanations for the lower incidence of CHD in women—a lower prevalence of risk factors, a better tolerance of risk factors, hormonal and metabolic differences giving relative protection to women and differences in clinical presentation. A little progress has been made but the basic problem remains. Meanwhile, those who need authoritative and well referenced reviews of many aspects of coronary heart disease, whether in men or women, will find them here.

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Operative Surgery has been for many surgeons the standard reference series. In this fourth edition 'Cardiothoracic Surgery' has been replaced by separate cardiac and thoracic sections, with a doubling of total pages. While the cardiac section has departed from the traditional format by the inclusion of long didactic chapters (and may have lost its way) this volume devoted to the non-cardiac component of thoracic surgery has retained the original flavour.

It is essentially for reference and should not be regarded as a text book from which to study the subject as a whole. The assistant at an operation new to him, the young surgeon extending his repertoire, or the consultant confronted with one of the rarities can all find guidance, quickly and clearly. It should also help the non-specialist coping with an unforeseen problem or complication. The wealth of illustration with high quality pen and ink drawing remains a great strength and it is pleasing to see the artists’ names in the headings and front sheets rather than tagged on in small italic print.

The late John Jackson was joined in editing by David Cooper, now in Cape Town. The series has become international but more than half of these authors are British, including the new wave pulmonary and oesophageal specialists. Inevitably, I cannot agree with everything advocated in this book and there will be no individual who does, but the clarity and good sense of the teaching makes it safe and reliable. A large variety of procedures are involved in thoracic surgery, and the outcome and the quality of the result are often governed by technique. An easily accessible operative manual is of great value and should be available in the unit, not locked up in the academic centre. A book of one’s own is even better—my copy of the third edition certainly saw plenty of use.

T. Treasure
19 Wimpole Street,
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William Bowers has brought together some of the legends of hand surgery to discuss the most difficult of all the surgical problems in the hand. The book is extremely well laid out in 5 sections, the first section covering the anatomy and biomechanics. The contribution by Littler and Thompson is stimulating and informative. The discussion of the biomechanics by Paul Brand and his associates is quite excellent in its detail and its conclusions, and this section really brings home to the reader just how complex the practical biomechanics of this joint are.

The second section on repair and reconstruction of injury is a quite excellent contribution in that it brings together the standard procedures and the difficulties that may be encoun-
Myocardial Infarction in Women

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