
Book review

Chirurgische Operationslehre, Volume 3, Ösophagus, Magen, Duodenum edited by K Kremer, W Lierse and H W Schreiber. 365 pp. illustrated. Georg Thieme, Stuttgart. 1987. No price given.

This is the third volume, entitled Oesophagus, Stomach and Duodenum, in a 10 volume German series entitled *Chirurgische Operationslehre*, under the overall editorship of Professor Kremer from Düsseldorf, who was also chief editor of this volume. The book must be compared with its counterpart in *Rob and Smith's Operative Surgery* because this is their equivalent. There are 365 pages, with a very clear type, good subdivisions and subtitles, 736 superb coloured drawings, which are much clearer than a black and white line technique, and 1056 diagrams. There has been a concerted effort to combine anatomy and surgery and the surgeon's hand intrudes in white so the anatomical definition, stitches, instruments and procedures appear extremely clearly. The illustrations are outstanding and there is more text than in most of Rob and Smith, although the recent volumes on trauma by Howard Champion are more like this volume. As befits a German book on gastric surgery there is good emphasis on historical aspects. There are two pages on stitch techniques going back to Jobert and Lembert in the 1820s through to Wölfler's, 1881, mucosal and serosal stitch which was tested on animals before being used for the first partial gastrectomy by Billroth in 1881. There are similarly full pages of all the variations of the Billroth I and II operations as well as reconstructive reservoirs. A good technique is used for labelling the different steps of the operations numerically, followed by individual descriptions, which is especially useful in the partial gastrectomies. For each operation there are lists of the potential complications. Additionally in the separate sections on bleeding and perforated ulcers, there is a practical appreciation of those terrible duodenal stumps when the perforation seems to have destroyed the

posterior wall completely or when the blood wells up from a huge hole which no fairy-like endoscopic knitting machine can hope to staunch.

Most of this magnum opus is concerned with the old-fashioned but modernised treatment of ulcers and tumours, but there are 14 pages on the different antireflux procedures correctly brought down to size and importance. The volume ends with 14 pages of references, historical and classical, for techniques and 18 pages of index which are done in alphabetical and hierarchical form rather than using the single keyword manner; but that is helpful.

Resection of the cardia is headed by the three giants Ohsawa, 1930; Sauerbruch, 1932; and Nissen, 1937. The only mistake I could find described the abdominal approach to resection of the cardia with the famous Mikulicz, 1986. On the shoulders of the giants we stand. The fact that the proof readers accepted Mikulicz as being our contemporary one century later demonstrates that the historical approach is correct. Remember that Will and Charlie Mayo in the last century spent weeks crossing the Atlantic to visit Billroth in Vienna and learn gastric surgery, while Billroth refused to leave Vienna to be professor in Berlin, because it would break up his musical evenings with Brahms. We should thank him for spending so much time on developing gastric surgery during the daytime!

The recommendation that this book should be translated into English should be interpreted as a complement to the facts that gastric surgery has a Germanic past and the splendid quality of this book produced by present-day German surgeons. If the text cannot be read the superb illustrations should be seen and appreciated.

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