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Book review

A companion to specialist surgical practice. "Quinta edición". Saunders Ltd. (2014)

The 5th edition of the classic series *Companion to specialist surgical practice* is now available. These last 17 years have brought about several modifications and adaptations to create this current version. Like the former edition, it is also available in e-book format with standard functions (download, search, cut and paste, print), and it even provides bibliographic support through Medline for obtaining the complete text of free references or those that the reader has electronic access to.

The editors of the series are two British surgeons with brilliant professional careers: Professor Olivier James Garden and Simon Paterson-Brown, both from the University of Edinburgh. Along with other prestigious colleagues, they have coordinated the 8 volumes that complete the series: *Core topics in general and emergency surgery* (S. Paterson-Brown); *Oesophagogastric surgery* (M. Griffin, S.A. Raimes and J. Shenfine); *Hepatobiliary and pancreatic surgery* (O. James Garden and R.W. Parks); *Colorectal surgery* (R.K.S. Philips and S. Clark); *Breast* (J.M. Dixon), *Endocrine* (T.W.J. Leonard) and *Vascular and endovascular surgery* (J.D. Beard, P.A. Gaines and I. Loftus). The list of authors is quite long (close to 400) and impossible to enumerate in a book review, but they are all well-known, active specialists (this was one of the proposals of this current edition, which entailed the substitution of many authors from earlier editions). It is also apparent that the editors have taken great pains not to overlap the information of the most transversal volumes, such as those about endocrine surgery or transplantation.

The information is provided in a clear, concise and detailed manner. The end-result is impeccable, easy to read, and topped off with magnificent tables, diagrams and figures. They have maintained the format of summary text boxes with key messages that readers should remember, as well as emphasizing the most relevant bibliographic references, some of which include comments. With some design variations, the text also highlights facts that meet the criteria for evidence-based medicine, grouping them into 2 sections: those supported by meta-analysis, clinical trials (controlled or not) or with "quasi-experimental" designs (levels of evidence Ia and b and IIa and b); and those from non-experimental studies or expert opinions (levels III and IV). Some chapters have appendices with additional information that is useful for

curious readers who want to expand their knowledge, as well as comments about possible areas of innovation, even though the current objective data are still very limited. Last of all, each volume has excellent indices that make it easy to search for information.

Within the limits of a review, it is impossible to contemplate all the aspects or give a chapter-by-chapter description of a 2600-page publication in 8 volumes that maintain an extraordinary homogeneity (once again, the editors' efforts are evident). Many of the chapters stand out. This is especially true of the volume on basic aspects of general surgery and surgical emergencies, which defends the essence of general surgery versus sub-specialization, especially when many of these "day" specialists work as general surgeons when on night duty. There is a review of the concepts of evidence-based medicine, evaluation of the results of surgery (a splendid chapter), major outpatient surgery, thromboembolic prophylaxis, the organization of surgery departments, treatment of septic processes and those requiring intensive care, and the use of scoring systems to estimate surgical risk and nutrition. Despite having undergone obvious reformation, the 3 volumes dedicated to gastrointestinal surgery (oesophagogastric, hepatobiliary and pancreatic, and colorectal) maintain what we could call a conventional distribution. They discuss the most relevant situations of each of the subspecialties, while updating information and providing specific sections about, for example, new methods of endoscopic or laparoscopic treatment of oesophagogastric diseases, techniques for percutaneous tibial nerve stimulation for the treatment of fecal incontinence, or abdomino-perineal resection, incorporating the levator muscle of the anus. In the volume on endocrine surgery, there is an outstanding discussion about the use of prophylactic central lymph node dissection in thyroid cancer and the use of minimally invasive approaches. In the tome on breast surgery, the chapters about diagnosis have been re-written, with a discussion of the most controversial aspects of screening techniques and also areola-nipple diseases, with reference to ductal endoscopy. Likewise, this volume incorporates the most recent advances in conservative surgery, oncoplastic surgery and mastectomy techniques. The volume on transplantation (one of the most revised) is probably the most multidisciplinary and may be useful to specialists from many different settings. It includes the most recent technical innovations, new immunosuppression regimes and a discussion about ethical and clinical

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dilemmas. Last of all, there is a volume dedicated to vascular surgery that emphasizes non-invasive diagnostic techniques, medical alternatives and endovascular procedures.

Although the main target audience of the series is medical residents (especially those in their last years of training) and attending physicians who are starting their specialization, the information and the way in which it is presented render it useful for any type of surgeon. Medical specialists, intensive care physicians, oncologists or surgical nurses as well would be provided with an overview of any topic in a matter of minutes. Thus, this series should be

available in libraries of accredited teaching centers and in the common areas of hospital surgery departments for consultation.

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