Book reviews


This book on the treatment of chronic pain will be of great value to students at any stage of their career and doctors both in hospitals and general practice.

Dr. Dudley Hart writes with great authority and has gathered a team of exceptional ability to help him. Each author approaches the subject differently but deals with the problems of pain in a clear-cut and practical manner. The opening chapter on mechanisms and measurement of pain is very interesting. The whole book is well-balanced without undue overlap between the different contributions.

P. B. S. Fowler


This book is excellently presented on good quality paper and with the usual good quality 'lie-flat' binding. The illustrations are excellent, both photographic and diagrammatic, and in fact some of the diagrams of assessment charts are more easily seen in the book than in their original form. There is a very complete bibliography and an adequate index.

The author describes the basic concept of flexible implant design; its various modifications and its final adaption. The book shows how in using an elastomer the whole implant must be flexible and not just a small hinge segment at the point of flexion. Silastic by Dow Corning seemed an ideal material to fulfill such an implant concept and, after being subjected to design trials and tests on a specially designed jig, was finally adopted. The book stresses the need for allowing the implant to have a piston action between the bones and that too rigid fixation of the implant leads to fracture of the material. The concept is that the implant only acts as a 'spacer' following adequate excision arthroplasty and, as such, most emphasis must be placed on adequate, proper soft tissue mobilization and repair, not simply on the use of the implant.

The author stresses the need for careful assessment, documentation, and follow-up of all the patients. The usual stress is laid on the need for teamwork in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis and emphasis on the fact that the operation is only one incident in the total treatment of the condition. Dr. Swanson lays down strict indications for excision and implant arthroplasty and lays down explicitly the details both of the operations and of postoperative treatment. It is interesting to note that the author described the use of 'braces' rather than 'splints' for the postoperative treatment of the joints. This emphasizes Dr. Swanson's dynamic concept of treatment in rheumatoid arthritis.

Following this, each chapter gives a detailed exposition of the treatment of arthritis of the various joints by excision and implant arthroplasty using the Dow Corning Silastic Swanson Prostheses. General acceptance of the use of these prostheses for finger and thumb joints and for carpal replacement is now standard. This, however, is not so in the use of Dr. Swanson's implants for excision arthroplasty of the wrist, elbow, and shoulder. It is entirely natural that such an author with such a large investigative facility and such a large research programme should extend the potentials of the use of the silastic implants to its ultimate.

Of less interest in the book to the hand surgeon is the description of the use of silastic in amputation stumps and weight-bearing amputations.

There is a final chapter on the present state and the future of flexible implant arthroplasty in which the author states, '... the proper dissemination of knowledge of the concepts and techniques used ... remains our most important work'. The book does this adequately and elegantly, and to those interested enough in the subject the price of the book is not too great. I think Dr. Swanson and his publishers are to be congratulated upon this book.

J. V. Jeffs

Note

Heberden Society

Symposium, London, September 20, 1974

A symposium on 'Histocompatibility and rheumatic disease' was held at the Royal College of Physicians, London, on September 20, 1974. Two sessions were held, chaired by Dr. R. M. Mason, and by Sir Cyril Clarke. The symposium was attended by approximately 200 people, including 15 speakers and 14 discussants.

The proceedings will be published, edited by Dr. Derrick A. Brewerton, as Supplement No. 1 to Volume 34 of the Annals.