Book review


Hardly a week goes by without another Sports Medicine textbook appearing on the bookshelves, yet this is something different. For one thing, it sets out to be comprehensive and provide a reference for all involved in the treatment of athletes. There is always the risk that in trying to appeal to all a book may spread its information too thinly and end up appealing to none. That is a criticism that cannot be aimed at this text, which is nothing if not detailed.

The ankle, knee, and shoulder are given special treatment as the joints that are most commonly injured, and most other areas get some consideration under topics such as overuse injuries. The section on the knee is comprehensive and it is a pleasure to read a text that is not too surgically biased (most current texts give details of all the operations without dealing with the aetiological factors that differentiate sporting injuries from other soft tissue trauma). For example, thanks to the choice of authors from this side of the Atlantic, a conservative view is given of haemarthrosis which is a pleasant change from texts that recommend immediate ACL reconstruction, if not instant MRI. The information given on ligament injuries of the ankle is comprehensive and includes tips on the timing of rehabilitation stages. The only worry is that these could be used to avoid organising goal based regimens in which the athlete progresses only after achieving the set goal.

The section on the shoulder covers all aspects from Neer’s theories of the 80s to the arthroscopic management of the 90s. Perhaps one weakness is the apparent lack of understanding of the ‘wilful’ dislocator who often does benefit from treatment if it includes biofeedback. There is also a shortage of information on muscular rehabilitation for mild instability and for rotator cuff lesions where surgery is perhaps overstressed. These are, however, small failings in a book that offers something helpful in most detail.

Some chapters go into greater detail and will leave most readers scratching their heads. Is it necessary to provide the number of formulae in the physiology sections? This reviewer has a grounding in physiology, yet tended to switch off after a few lines such as

\[ E_{\text{reg}} = \frac{0.0621 \times \text{body weight} + 2.0577}{1.56} + R \]

or \[ S^2 T^2 V \] which is interesting as the statements may be. For large majorities of readers this is excessive detail and can often serve to confuse the unwary. Reference volumes need to present scientific support for theories and to refer to the original research papers, but can do this without the detail this book gives.

There is some unnecessary duplication, such as two chapters on cardiovascular adaptations to exercise—one under ‘Medical Aspects of Sport’ the other under ‘Sports Science’. They cover slightly different material, but there is enough repetition to be irritating. Some other medical aspects of sport are covered well, yet musculoskeletal problems other than trauma get no consideration other than regarding the skeleton. What about the potential for confusion with rheumatological conditions arising in young athletes? This surely needs a section of its own if this book is going to appeal to all caring for athletes.

Further on the subject of duplication, it was disappointing to have to look through both the section on the patella and that on overuse injuries of the knee to get a complete picture of anterior knee pain. It is necessary to look hard to find reference to the relevance of foot biomechanics in either, as this is mentioned only in relation to the condition in the young in whom muscular strengthening is more important. It was also disappointing to find this 1994 text has continued to use the term chondromalacia to represent patellofemoral anterior knee pain with which it correlates poorly. A section on stress fractures is extensive and clear and includes a short resume of the factors that predispose, but it is not clear how to refer to the general introduction to the section on overuse injuries to get a good picture of the aetiiological factors (and it is good!); these introductory chapters are often overlooked when referring to the text to update one’s treatment on a specific issue.

Overall this is a useful book with some very good sections, but some overfull sections, and some rather disappointing chapters. The range of authors ensures a balance of perspectives, but it is not clear if it will fulfil all the needs of the sports medic regardless of background. For the price, it really needs a clearer organisation and thereby an easier reference, and while it will be a very useful addition to the department library it is unlikely to be seen next to every treatment couch.