

Book Review

Surgical Rehabilitation in Leprosy, by Frank McDowell and Carl Enna. Baltimore, Williams & Wilkins Company. 438 pp.

It is good to be able to welcome another book on this subject, especially one which is so admirably produced and profusely illustrated. The co-editors are to be congratulated on the large number of authors that they have been able to recruit to write on the different topics.

The entire range of the deformities of leprosy is covered. Of the 438 pages 115 are devoted to the face and its deformities, 140 to the hand, 107 to the foot including footwear and prosthesis and the rest to other aspects of the problem including nerves, skin, breasts, testes and the social rehabilitation of the patient.

On the whole the editors have made an excellent choice of authors. A number of names completely new in the field of leprosy surgery have found their way into the pages. These names are in the main well known in their respective specialties, but some of them have, on their own admission, had only a limited experience of leprosy. Consequently, a great variety of procedures are described and there is no means for the reader to know which are the most reliable and useful. It is a reference book of possible alternatives, but what it gains in this direction it loses in the direction of authoritativeness. Some of the chapters tend to contradict each other especially in areas where there is controversy such as in the surgery of nerves. This is of course inevitable when different authors are working on different races and often aiming at different end results.

The field of surgical reconstruction in leprosy is however still wide open for new developments. Reconstruction should be done by specialists in their own field, and not by a peculiar brand of surgeon who limits himself to leprosy and tackles everything that he finds in it. This is a good principle and worthily upheld in this book. It will undoubtedly have a great impact on the world of reconstructive surgery and help to lift the repair of deformity in leprosy out of its present plight, and bring it into an area of respectability.

This book should be in the library of every plastic and orthopaedic surgeon practising in any country where leprosy is reasonably prevalent.

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