**Surgery**


This extraordinary work is in its third edition in 20 years—unusual these days when general surgery textbooks are often revised every five years, ostensibly to keep current with rapid changes in the specialty. Thomas A. Miller, MD, editor of the first two editions, is now joined by two coeditors. I was privileged to review the second edition and noted that it was “an important medical literary achievement . . . sure to be the flagship of surgical physiology for years to come.”¹ This now appears to be an understatement.

The first edition (1988) appeared as a basic surgical physiology text, targeting students and residents. The second edition (1998) was more clinically oriented and of practical value to the experienced surgeon as well. This latest version far surpasses the first two, or any similar publication whose goal is to present the anatomical, physiological, and biochemical basis for surgical diseases and apply this information to the diagnosis and management of surgical disorders.

Refreshingly, *Modern Surgical Care* is, with a few exceptions, devoid of descriptions of surgical technique, which can always be found in atlases and textbooks of surgery whose emphasis differs from Miller’s. Using a National Football League (NFL) analogy, Miller’s first edition would be in the expansion team category, the second edition would take the team to the playoffs, and the third is a virtual cinch for the Super Bowl.

The publisher has elected to present *Modern Surgical Care* in two volumes. This has probably increased the price but makes the text much more manageable and transportable than a single, oversized, 10-lb volume.

Volume 1 is divided into two parts, with the 300-page part 1—“General Considerations in the Management of Surgical Patients”—the evident raison d’existence of the entire work. Chapters are dedicated to metabolic responses to starvation, stress, and sepsis; fluid and electrolyte disorders; nutritional considerations; and immunocompromised and transplant patients. Excellent discussions consider surgical sepsis and organ failure, hematological problems in surgery (including thrombosis and hemostasis), pathophysiology of shock, basic science applications in the management of neoplasms, and the popular topic of pain control in surgical patients. The final chapter in part 1 addresses preparation of patients for surgery and is probably the most valuable single chapter in the entire work.

Part 2 of volume 1, “Alimentary Tract,” covers the subject from esophagus to anorectum and includes chapters on the liver, biliary tract, and spleen. Every aspect of the gastrointestinal tract is presented: physiology and surgical anatomy of each organ, signs and symptoms of disease, critical studies in the medical workup, and recommendations for surgical management. Postoperative care and complications are also well covered.


The chapter on the esophagus is a good example of the excellent format and content of all 61 chapters. Surgical anatomy is presented, from the cricopharyngeus muscle to its junction with the stomach below the diaphragm. Also presented is the significance of this anatomy in the physiology of swallowing and digestion. Typical and atypical symptoms are discussed, including cough and chest pain, which can confuse the clinical diagnosis of esophageal disease. Physical findings and endoscopic and radiological studies are reviewed along with more sophisticated manometric determinations and pH monitoring. This material forms an excellent foundation for the discussion of gastroesophageal reflux disease that follows. A comprehensive review of medical vs surgical management is included, with reference to conditions from mild esophagitis to Barrett esophagus and to motor disorders, including achalasia. Diagnosis and treatment (curative and palliative) are presented for benign tumors and carcinoma. Like all the text’s chapters, this one ends with a short summary that offers the authors’ primary points of emphasis. A bibliography of 130 references completes the chapter.

In my view, *Modern Surgical Care* continues to lead the pack as the best textbook of surgery on the market dedicated to thorough understanding of basic surgical physiology and anatomy and application of that knowledge to the diagnosis and management of surgical disorders. As a two-volume set, it is somewhat more costly than some other texts but is still less expensive than two good seats at an NFL game.

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Financial Disclosures: None reported.