Surgery of pediatric anorectal malformations

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This new book published in 2005 is essentially an updated edition of the previous book by the same author entitled ‘Anorectal Malformations,’ Oxford University Press, 1993. Professor Subir Chatterjee is a pioneer of pediatric surgery in India and a very well-known figure in the world of Pediatric Surgeons both in India and abroad. This book is not only a record of his personal experience but is also a reflection of his original thinking.

The initial chapters of this book are very well written. Chapter 1 deals with the evolution of the present day understanding of anorectal malformations in all its aspects. This chapter is a ‘must read’ for all those practicing or wanting to practice this form of pediatric surgery.

The second chapter deals with the structure and function of the regional structures. The controversy about the presence/absence of the puborectalis ‘sling’ has still not been resolved, although the author does refer to fetal dissections. However, the arguments are not very convincing in the absence of good photomicrographs; line diagrams come across as very poor substitutes to support a controversial subject.

Chapter 3 describes the classification, diagnosis, and imaging very comprehensively. However, because the author has been part of a global group on consensus on anorectal malformations, it is surprising that instead of working within the established classification and trying to put the regional (geographical) peculiarities in appropriate places or as separate groups within it, the author tries to be different. This may be perfectly correct, but it causes confusion particularly in the minds of the less initiated.

Chapter 4 and should be used as a reference for the proper understanding of the etiopathogenesis of these malformations.

Chapter 5 deals with the general principles of treatment (presumably the author’s). The importance of colostomy in the treatment of anorectal malformations justifies chapter 6 being exclusively devoted to it. The finer points in the construction and management of colostomy and the spectrum of complications should be a reference point for the learner and the learned alike.

Chapters 7–15 record in detail the author’s experience and his personal views on the nomenclature and approach to the diagnosis and treatment of specific anorectal malformations referring simultaneously to similar/related experience of others.

Chapter 16, which deals with results, is too brief and this is disappointing in an era when there is greater emphasis on quality rather than the quantity of life. More details on clinical scoring systems, anorectal manometry, and urodynamics for the evaluation of associated neurovesical dysfunction would have been very welcome. In a single author’s book, one would have also expected to read a comprehensive postoperative evaluation of the many hundreds of patients who have been the inspiration for this book.

On the whole, a book worth reading and possessing.

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