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Jack A. Friedland, M.D.
Review Editor

Handbook of Plastic Surgery


In an ever-expanding field such as plastic surgery, it is increasingly more difficult to summarize the extensive amount of available information in a quick and easy-to-read format. Single-volume texts on the entirety of plastic surgery must sufficiently cover the myriad of topics without becoming so diluted as to become unhelpful to the reader. It is a daunting task, to be sure, and one that the Handbook of Plastic Surgery attempts to tackle.

This 771-page hardback book is subdivided into 10 sections: “Patient Management,” “Basic Techniques and Principles in Plastic Surgery,” “Skin and Soft Tissue,” “Head and Neck,” “Pediatric Plastic Surgery,” “Microsurgery,” “Hand Surgery,” “Trunk and Lower Extremity,” “Breast Surgery,” and “Aesthetic Surgery.” The lengths of the sections vary, with the greatest number of pages devoted to “Head and Neck,” “Pediatric Plastic Surgery,” “Hand Surgery,” and “Aesthetic Surgery.” The book was authored by several well-known and well-respected plastic surgeons whose names are easily recognizable by the reader. Evidently, it was also authored by residents (according to the editor’s preface), although this information is not available within the text because there is no author reference section. Instead, all authors and their current locations are listed at the beginning of each chapter, but that is all.

As admitted by the Editor-in-Chief, this handbook is modeled after such popular quick-reference manuals as the Washington Manual and the Mont Reid Surgical Handbook, as evidenced by the bullet point and outline format. The entire book is printed in black and white, and the illustrations are a combination of simplistic diagrams, artistic renderings, and basic reproductions from other texts, which are mainly used to describe anatomy and basic techniques. The style is terse, yet clear and understandable. There is no standard design to the chapters; each author has followed his or her own approach, which lends to variability in format, length, depth, and style.

As a single-volume text on plastic surgery, this book succeeds in addressing the requisite subtopics and their respective high points. It is comprehensive, yet very easy to read, understand, and digest. It includes several additional subjects that most other basic plastic surgery texts do not address. For example, the subsection on “Patient Management” addresses such topics as blood products, postoperative care, and complications, all of which are vitally important to the care of the plastic surgery patient yet rarely mentioned in other texts. Other interesting and relevant additions to the standard table of contents are chapters on general dermatology, radiation, principles of orthognathic surgery, hand burns (specifically), splinting and immobilization, sedation, and nasal and sinus pathology. These well-written chapters add to the comprehensiveness of the book. The “Pediatric Plastic Surgery” section, with contributions from the likes of Bradley, Kawamoto, Longaker, McCarthy, Cutting, and Mulliken, is outstanding.

The shortcomings of this text are somewhat self-inflicted. In an attempt to cover the breadth of plastic surgery in a single book with a limited amount of space, some information was necessarily omitted. This is expected, although some
chapters suffer more than others. Perhaps the
biggest issue, though, is that this text is posi-
tioned as a handbook, as its moniker would sug-
gest. As a handbook, this nearly 2-inch thick,
771-page hardback volume is not portable and
does not fit into the coat pocket of the medical
student, resident, or fellow, as the Washington
Manual and Mont Reid handbooks do. Therefore,
I would say that it is not truly a handbook. In-
stead, it is a useful, single-volume, “high-impact”
shelf reference book, and as such, it will un-
doubtedly prove its usefulness to those in train-
ing, those studying for the in-service or written
and oral boards, and those studying for recerti-

cification.

Jeff Janis, M.D.

100 Questions & Answers about Breast
Surgery

By Joseph J. Disa, M.D., and Marie Czenko Kuechel,
M.A. Pp. 209. Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Sudbury,

“Empower yourself!”

These words are in bold type on the back cover,
and I think they epitomize the goal of the book. The
book is written for women who are contemplating or
have had breast surgery and seeks to give them the an-
swers as well as the questions that are pertinent to their sit-
uation. It is also of some inter-

test to surgeons who per-
form breast surgery, to give us an idea of what
questions are on the minds of women undergo-
ing breast surgery and what kinds of information
women have from public lay sources. The book is
a standard paperback and covers both recon-
structive and cosmetic topics. How to handle the
issues on the minds of women undergoing mas-
tectomy and contemplating breast enhancement
can be delicate. The authors take an even, seri-
ous, and authoritative tone and handle this broad range of potentially emotional issues ad-
mirably well. I do not believe that women seek-
ing breast augmentation would be put off by the
reconstructive portion or that women with re-
cconstructive issues would be upset by the way
augmentation is handled.

The book is divided into 12 parts that help

guide the reader to the section of interest. Within the questions, readers are additionally
prompted to go on to other questions for fur-
ther, related information when available. I found
the book to be clear and well written, with
up-to-date information, including many Web
sites as references in the text. Referencing
Web sites should help to keep the book cur-
rent and is particularly useful to the lay public
interested in medical information. The text is
supplemented with black-and-white illustra-
tions taken from the American Society of Plas-
tic Surgeons’ patient information brochures.

The shortcomings of the book are predictable.

Neil A. Fine, M.D.