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BOOK REVIEW

Title: IMPACT THERAPY, 3rd Ed., 1979
Author: John B. Tracey
Publisher: Author, Gipsy Lane Gardens, Pinhoe, Exeter
Price: 115 pages Index Approx. 65 figs. Soft Cover

Like the book by Dr. James Cyriax, this is also on the subject of Orthopaedic Medicine. When an object is struck it is compressed in the line of force acting upon it, but expands in the plane at right angles, and this is used by Dr. Tracey for the treatment of a wide variety of joint and soft tissue disorders. The limb is supported on bags filled with sand or seed, another bag is placed above the limb and repeated blows are transmitted through this bag with a sand bag held in the hand. This impact helps to overcome muscle spasm and allows minor degrees of subluxation of the joint to be reduced. In Dr. Tracey's own hands, and in those people he has trained, this appears to be a very successful procedure in many cases. In several demonstrations that I have seen, the technique appears simple, and physiotherapists and others in the audience who have volunteered as subjects have felt relief from the minor orthopaedic disorders from which most of us suffer.

As well as the use of impact by sand bags, certain forms of manipulation are also described, including exercises and even manual impact that the patient can carry out upon himself; for example, for lesions of the tempero-mandibular joint. There is an assumption in the book that most joint lesions are mild degrees of subluxation whose reduction is helped by joint distraction. This distraction also straightens out any tendency to wrinkling of the articular cartilage. I know of no evidence that such wrinkling actually occurs, but those experienced with arthroscopy may have observed this phenomenon during passive movements of joints.

The book itself is not nearly as impressive as Dr. Tracey's lecture demonstrations. There is reduplication of diagrams and of the introductory statements preceding the description of his various procedures. This is because the second half of the book consists to a large extent of the instruction leaflets written for the use of patients, and others compiled for therapists, which have been collected together. The exact technique is not always easy to understand when reading through instructions quickly, but needs to be studied very carefully, together with the illustrations. The free flow of text is interrupted by the overuse of capital letters and bold and italic type, and also by numerous cross references. There is an adequate index. Precise instructions are given not only for carrying out the impact and manipulation procedures, but also for constructing the necessary apparatus or giving lists of suppliers who can provide it.

For those treating soft tissue injuries, both from sport, from occupation or daily living, the theories and practice contained in this book are well worth considering. The indications for treatment are stated clearly and even more clearly the contra-indications and other warnings. I can, therefore, recommend the book to both doctors and physiotherapists, but would like to see more published critical reports of this treatment written by others than the author himself. I know Dr. Tracey has been trying to promote this form of treatment, which brings little or no profit to himself, over a period of many years the first edition of "Impact Therapy" was published in 1967, but based upon methods used for many years before that. His techniques deserve wider trial and acceptance.

H. E. Robson