

BOOK REVIEW

Title: ATHLETIC INJURIES TO THE HEAD, NECK AND FACE
Editor: Joseph S. Torg
Publisher: Lea & Febiger, 1982
 Price £20.15 or US \$32.50

This is a comprehensive book with contributions from 22 different authors. Its theme is prevention of injury based on sound epidemiological and scientific principles and the prevention of complications once injury has occurred.

It has four sections. The first deals with the extent of the problem of head and neck injury in sport and examines specific activities. It is understandably biased, being an American text, towards injury in American football but other potential causes of facial or cranio-cervical trauma are well examined and there is adequate reference to current literature. The chapter on standards of protective equipment underlines the importance of biomechanical testing with surrogate models of the human head. This would apply to protective equipment in all sports which often is accepted at face value.

The next three sections deal specifically with the injured areas in turn. The mechanisms of injury and their management both in the field and hospital situation are described. I was disappointed to note in the chapter on "Field Evaluation of Head and Neck Injuries" that an outdated classification of concussion was used for in a later chapter (by a different author) we are presented with a different classification. This will only confuse the reader about an already confused subject. However, the use of the Glasgow Coma Scale as a simple assessment of head injured patients in the chapter on "Focal Intracranial Haematoma" was encouraging to note. This scale has now been widely recommended and adopted in many parts of the world. Communication about a patient's state should be as accurate and uniform as possible when referring the patient to hospital. This can only be achieved by speaking the same language.

One further area where criticism might be directed in "Field Evaluation of Head and Neck Injuries" is the use of the "Log roll" in someone suspected of having a neck injury. Only in exceptional circumstances would such patients be rolled by non-medical staff and our advice would be to leave the patient, provided he is breathing, in the position in which he lies until help with specialised interlocking stretchers is available.

In the second section four chapters cover the anatomy, mechanisms of injury and radiography of the cervical spine with a further two related to the upper extremity. These are comprehensive and comprehensible. Further there are several pages on operative principles and techniques. These give insight into the surgical procedures necessary to achieve stability after certain neck injuries without becoming clouded with minutiae.

The final section on facial, oral and eye injuries enunciates clearly the principles for the management of soft tissue facial trauma and discusses facial fractures. The chapters on dental and eye injury again stress the importance of prevention of injury and advocate the use of effective protective equipment.

Apart from the criticisms in the section on head injury I think that this is a good text for the doctor who is particularly interested in head and neck injury. Its detail and operative technicalities make it unlikely to be read by the coach and trainer which I think is a pity. It would however be an excellent reference book in any sports medicine library.

Greg McLatchie