

BOEKBESPREKINGS : BOOK REVIEWS

MALPRACTICE LITIGATION

Surgical and Allied Malpractice. By B. J. Ficarra, A.B., Sc.B., LL.B., M.D., Sc.D., Ph.D., LL.D., J.D. Pp. xi + 1234. \$60.00. Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas. 1968.

This monumental work represents the most comprehensive documentation in the English language to date of what the author refers to in his prologue as 'the wisdom born through the painful labor of sad experiences'. The author describes how malpractice litigation—in which the surgeon is a prime target—has reached 'epidemic' proportions in the USA in recent years.

A substantial part of the book is devoted to a profound and detailed analysis of the sources of surgical malpractice, undertaken conveniently according to regional anatomy, e.g. head and neck procedures, the thoracic region, and the abdomen. Next, liabilities stemming from ancillary surgical devices, such as anaesthesia, blood transfusion, etc., are dealt with. Finally, and at length, medico-legal threats from other sources, such as fraud, defamation, human experimentation and transplantation, are discussed.

This book will be of great value, firstly, to surgeons and other medical practitioners as a catalogue of potential legal hazards, and, secondly, to lawyers as a vast source of precedents. But it must be borne in mind that there are fundamental differences in South African law which—among other factors—account for a much lower incidence of malpractice litigation here.

S.A.S.

GASTRO-ENTEROLOGY

Current Perspectives in Gastro-enterology. Ed. by W. S. Blakemore, M.D. and L. K. Ferguson, M.D. Pp. xiv + 319. Illustrated. \$12.60. New York and London: Hoeber Medical Division, Harper & Row. 1967.

This book is the second volume of *Current Perspectives in Surgery*. The first dealt with perspectives in cancer and the third with the management of the injured patient. This volume is intended for the postgraduate surgical trainee and the practising surgeon. There are 33 contributors, mostly from the Department of Surgery of the University of Pennsylvania.

Although some of the subjects are dealt with in a rather superficial way, this is more than counterbalanced by the detailed studies of the physiology and biochemistry involved in some of the more controversial subjects, e.g. the surgery of pancreatitis. There is an interesting chapter dealing with the pros and cons of selective vagotomy and drainage as opposed to truncal vagotomy and the older surgical measures involved in the treatment of duodenal ulcer. Another interesting chapter deals with the use of arteriography in the diagnosis of various abdominal conditions.

A great asset is the discussion at the conclusion of many of the chapters by a panel of surgeons well known for their interest in the particular fields discussed. Many of the questions and answers found here are precisely those which come to mind when reading the chapter preceding the discussion.

This book is recommended to the postgraduate student of surgery.

B.S.