
PREFACE

As Professor Owen H. Wangensteen, one of the greatest academic surgeons of the 20th century, said: “You are a true surgeon from the moment you are able to deal with your complications.” Prompt and accurate diagnosis, as well as effective treatment of surgical complications, is one of the most important elements of surgical practice. This is today more important than any other time since, over the last 20 years, we have observed the development of new surgical subspecialties, the performance of very complicated operations in very challenging patients, the introduction of new surgical technologies and, last but not least, an increasing interest in monitoring the quality, the medico-legal implications and the ethical dimensions of surgical practice and malpractice. However, the issue of surgical complications has been presented briefly and sporadically in various textbooks and only as a small part of chapters dealing with surgical techniques. Therefore, this book aims to present the surgical complications of all specialties in a systematic way and with emphasis on what is happening in real life and in everyday practice.

We are truly grateful to all the authors for contributing their expertise in a sound, smooth and elegant way. We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to Professor Sir Peter Morris for his inspiring Foreword and to all

our colleagues at Imperial College Press for their outstanding work. Finally, we would like to say how fortunate we feel to discover the painting on the cover of the book, which was created by an anonymous artist as if he/she had in mind the context of this book! It demonstrates in the best possible way our everlasting, tough and, sometimes, desperate battle to save our patient's life. In order to fight and, even more, win this battle, we need once again to prove right what Hippocrates said 2,500 years ago, "... a great doctor has the value and the strength of many other people together ... " and we hope that this book will serve as a wise companion and loyal ally to surgeons at all levels in their noble effort to do so.

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