



Surgical Anatomy of the Lumbar Plexus (2018) Editors: R.Shane Tubbs, Marios Loukas, Amgad S. Hanna, Rod J. Oskouian 220 pp, 130 illustrations, Hardback ISBN: 9781626238893 Thieme Publishers New York/Stuttgart.

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This book is a tour de force through the anatomy of the lumbar plexus, which is reflected by the title. The term surgical anatomy implies a focus on operative approaches, which is less the case. It is a hardback with 152 pages divided into 27 chapters written by a wide selection of experts, 43 in all. The contributors are mainly anatomists, but also the specialties radiology, anesthesiology, general surgery, neurosurgery, and even maxillofacial surgery are represented in the list of authors. The chapters are organized in a logical order moving from overview to single nerves to more specialized areas such as nerve blocks and comparative anatomy. Chapters are generally supported by illustrations and references, and the language appears flawless and homogeneous, to a degree suggesting comprehensive editorial efforts, especially considering that some of the authors are not native English speakers. There are a few disappointments, such as the poor quality and labelling of the images in the MRI neurography chapter (12), with numerous errors in the figure legends. After a few tests, the index appears sufficient.

The book is covering a very narrow topic by including a large number of contributors, which is a bit of a balance act, as everybody of course wants to contribute significantly. When reading through the book, I learned a lot, especially by repetition. There is so much overlap and repetition that it at times becomes tiresome, such as the review of patholog-

ical conditions in the MRI chapter followed by a similar review in the following chapter. The overview chapter contains a much too detailed account of the anatomy and lesions of every single nerve in the plexus, something that was clearly reserved for the following chapters. In each of these chapters, variations in the anatomy of the nerve are covered. This is then repeated in a chapter dedicated to variations in the anatomy of all the nerves. By organizing the book in this way, the editors have collected a number of short individual texts, rather than an integrated and well-delineated set of chapters. This makes the book more useful as a reference book, but less useful as a complete text, and it compromises the clarity of the book.

In the preface, the authors state the increasing use of anterior lumbar spinal approaches as one of the main reasons for this first book dedicated to the lumbar plexus anatomy. From the peripheral nerve surgeon's perspective, the limited coverage of the lateral cutaneous femoral nerve, especially the absence of any illustration of anatomical variations, is surprising, considering that meralgia paraesthetica must be one of the commonest extra-spinal pathologies of a nerve from the lumbar plexus. This seems to be compensated by the magnification of the lateral cutaneous femoral nerve in the cover illustration. To the spine surgeons, and the hernia surgeons, a stepwise detailed and illustrated account of surgical approaches and possible mistakes regarding the lumbar plexus would have been a useful supplement. The landmark chapter is making up for this to some degree. There is a very detailed and interesting analysis of the intra-epineural anatomy of the entire lumbar plexus. In this chapter, an account of the CNS-PNS transition zone in lumbar rootlets is missing.

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This is relevant to the possibility of regeneration in the lumbar plexus. The additional chapters about anesthetic blocks make the book relevant to anesthesiologists as well as surgeons.

All in all, this first edition of the first textbook dedicated to the surgical anatomy of the lumbar plexus is an original, valuable, and useful contribution, and can be recommended to surgeons performing complex lumbar spine surgery via ante-

rior approaches and surgeons performing inguinal hernia repairs. The book is best used to look up specific nerves, as a reference text, and works less well as a complete textbook, mainly due to the many overlaps between chapters.

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