his appendix panel plans and inter-professional codes, in an attempt to clarify this issue. Perhaps this may be the answer. Another proposal might be that the Court take the stand: unless malpractice is proved beyond a reasonable doubt and unless it is found that the defendant has had previous difficulties in the pursuit of his profession, the jury should be instructed to return an acquittal; that a general fund be set aside by all insurance companies as a common fund; and that a panel of lawyer, physician and insurer rather than a jury, establish a ratio of payment for injury or death.

The author explains the doctrines of proximate cause in medical malpractice, the necessity of expert testimony, assumption of risk by the patient, imputed negligence, contributory negligence, statute of limitation, and res ipsa loquitur. This section makes evident how little the average physician really understands of what a malpractice action entails.

This work is superior to the author’s previous textbook, “Anesthesia and the Law,” which apparently was spliced together from a series of lectures, and was replete with typographical errors. Much thought, patience and preparation is evident here. We are fortunate to have a true expert who is able to wear two hats and thus explain complex legal data in a simple fashion to the unsophisticated physician who by his calling is unfamiliar with this particular discipline.

If I were to look for a deficiency, it would be that there should have been a mock trial set up, showing how the physician should handle himself in court and examination before trial. Also helpful would have been a chapter devoted to how to prepare oneself as an expert witness for the plaintiff as well as for the defendant. The Law Department of the American Medical Association reports receiving many letters and phone calls from physicians who are almost terrified because they are going to have to be witnesses in trials of law-suits. It would be time well spent to explain that a well-prepared, honest, wide-awake expert witness need never be afraid of any lawyer’s examination because he knows so much more about the subject of his testimony than the lawyer can possibly know. General information such as this can allay the physician’s fears of appearing in court.

When one considers the change from the traditional image of the family doctor and his patient-family relationship, which no longer exists in today’s high degree of specialization, and the recent court decisions, this book becomes a must for every physician’s library.

ALBERT M. BETCHEE, M.D.


For mother and baby, childbirth has never been safer. Each year we see some further advance in our knowledge and understanding of the birth process. The obstetrician has learned to value collaboration with colleagues in other disciplines, as is well illustrated by the development of new and more effective techniques for the relief of pain in labor.

Drawing largely on his own experience, Dr. Flowers has written this book for obstetricians to help them broaden their knowledge and understanding of the various acceptable methods available for the relief of obstetric pain. First, he gives a brief but excellent account of the physiologic factors underlying obstetric analgesia and anesthesia. Then he rightly deals at some length with the various ways in which obstetric and anesthetic techniques contribute to maternal deaths (suitable case histories are given and there are many lessons to be learned here). In this section his findings are very similar to those reported recently in the “Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths” published in the United Kingdom—most important to note, as the deaths due to aspiration of stomach content. The significance of the deaths due to analgesia and anesthetic techniques is that they are the great extent preventable.

Dr. Flowers considers carefully the factors to be taken into account in choosing a program of pain relief for the individual patient, both for normal labor and for those cases where some obstetric complications have appeared. His views are sound and clearly presented; his meaning is never in doubt. The section about the effects of analgesia and anesthesia on the fetus is especially appropriate at this time, when new drugs and procedures are frequently introduced into obstetric practice.

The chapter on the preparation of the obstetric patient for labor and delivery is sensible and well balanced and avoids the common mistake of giving undue emphasis to one or another of the methods of natural childbirth. Each chapter has a carefully chosen list of international references.

The text is suitably illustrated by numerous line drawings and diagrams of the highest quality. The book deserves a place in the departmental library and indeed in the personal libraries of all practicing obstetricians.

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