



Book review

Heart valve disease: A guide to patient management after surgery. Eric G. Butchart, Christa Gohlke-Barwolf, Manuel J. Antunes, Roger J.C. Hall (Eds.). Informat Healthcare (2006). 199pp., ISBN 978 1 84214 3087.

Heart valve surgery has increased in frequency as improvements in surgical technique and peri-operative care have led to decreased cardiovascular morbidity and mortality. However, the survivors of valve surgery remain at risk for potentially serious complications and unique problems are commonly encountered during follow-up. Physicians need to understand the problems that may arise in the survivors of valve surgery and their optimal management to avoid potential complications and a poor outcome. "Heart Valve Disease: A Guide to Patient Management after Surgery" is a comprehensive review of the management of the valve surgery patient from the early post-operative period to long-term follow-up.

In the first two chapters, the authors discuss intensive care management in the immediate post-operative period and the underappreciated importance of early cardiac rehabilitation, including education and exercise training, to improve quality of life. Regular follow-up is essential after valve surgery and three chapters are devoted to the important components of clinical and echocardiographic follow-up. The critical role of echocardiographic in identifying prosthetic valve dysfunction is justifiably emphasized and recommendations for the frequency of echocardiographic follow-up for each heart valve substitute is provided. An extensive table with the normal echocardiographic values for most aortic and mitral prostheses encountered in clinical practice is a valuable addition. Individual chapters are devoted to the identification, investigation and management of common prosthetic valve complications, including systemic embolization, valve thrombosis, hemolysis and endocarditis. In addition, the prevention of these complications is addressed in specific chapters on antithrombotic management and

antibiotic prophylaxis to prevent endocarditis and rheumatic fever. The chapter on antithrombotic therapy is notable and includes extensive discussions on the mechanism of thrombosis and embolism in valve surgery patients, the optimal management of anticoagulation in the early post-operative period and during long-term follow-up depending on the valve type and associated thromboembolic risk factors, and the use of concomitant anti-platelet agents. The authors' more conservative recommendation on the use of anti-platelet agents differ from ACC/AHA guidelines, although they provide a compelling argument in support of their position. Commonly encountered management dilemmas are addressed in additional chapters, and include the management of the pregnant patient, and anticoagulation during pregnancy and non-cardiac surgery. A chapter on issues related to the child with previous valve surgery is also an interesting addition.

The book is easy to read and the chapters are logically organized. Concise tables with the authors' recommendations are included in many chapters and help summarize the discussions. A large number of echocardiographic and pathologic images are included and complement the text, although some echocardiographic images are dated. Each chapter includes an extensive list of references and allows the reader the convenient option to pursue additional reading. Overall, this book provides a comprehensive review of the management issues surrounding the valve disease patient after surgery and I would recommend it to all cardiologists, cardiac surgeons and trainees involved in the care of these patients.

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