Michael Belkin, MD  
Department of Surgery  
Brigham & Women's Hospital  
Harvard Medical School  
Boston, Mass.

Interventional radiology of the peripheral vascular system  

The stated purpose of this text is to provide practical guidelines on interventional vascular procedures for the inexperienced and occasional operator. The practices described are those of the individual authors, all of whom are interventional radiologists practicing in England. The book focuses on standard interventional procedures and specifically omits “experimental” techniques such as laser, atherectomy, and stents. It covers the topics of percutaneous transluminal angioplasty (PTA), thrombolysis, therapeutic embolization, and retrieval of intravascular foreign bodies. The text is, however, well-organized and succinct, and contains adequate basic information on each topic for the beginner. The drawings and radiographs are well reproduced and ample in number to illustrate each described technique. The chapter on PTA contains an adequate review of the indications and contraindications to this procedure. There is no review of the pathophysiology of PTA, which might be of interest to the novice. It includes a “shopping list” of equipment needed for PTA and an excellent section on arterial access. The techniques of guidewire manipulation and of balloon dilatation are covered sufficiently; the author refers to the use of stents in failed PTA, but there is no mention of technique. A more detailed description of PTA of the superficial femoral and iliac arteries (the most common sites of balloon dilatation) would be helpful to the beginner. Finally, there is a review of the results of PTA for various sites; the results of Johnston’s prospective study (Ann Surg 1987;206:403-12), which was a more realistic appraisal of PTA, are conspicuously absent.

The section covering thrombolysis is well-designed and thorough. It includes a good basic review of the techniques involved, indications for and contraindications to thrombolysis, and management of the patient receiving catheter-directed lytic therapy. The author briefly covers problems that may be encountered during thrombolysis and their management. A brief review of currently available lytic agents and their mechanism of action is included. The topic of therapeutic embolization is covered in a well-organized chapter, including indications, materials and equipment, technique, complications, and aftercare. Although these techniques are not likely to be used by the beginner or by the practicing vascular surgeon, the subject is nonetheless well represented. The subject of foreign-body retrieval is likewise well organized. Although these procedures are, again, not likely to be employed by the novice, the chapter reviews a number of techniques that can be used in difficult situations (such as a dislodged stent) during routine peripheral interventional procedures. These practical hints may prove invaluable to the practitioner.

The chapter covering intracaval filtering devices is clearly useful to the practicing interventionalist. It is, again, well organized and covers the indications for and contraindications to filter placement. The insertion techniques for a variety of filter types are reviewed, as are technical problems likely to be encountered and their solutions. A helpful table comparing various filters is included, covering cost, recurrent embolization rate, caval thrombosis rate, appropriateness with respect to caval diameter, and deliverability via the left femoral vein.

In summary, this book adequately and concisely covers the basic issues and techniques of peripheral vascular intervention. As such, it accomplishes its stated purpose. It is easy to read, and has been written by radiologists who are clearly experienced in vascular interventional techniques. The text contains a number of practical tips that are of use to practitioners, especially those just venturing into the field of endovascular intervention. The book’s only obvious shortcoming is its omission of endovascular stents. Although the editor specifically deletes the topic as “experimental,” stents are an important part of any busy interventional practice. They therefore deserve some attention in any new interventional text. In general, this book is probably too simple for the practicing interventional radiologist, but is well worth its $85 price tag for the vascular surgeon unfamiliar with catheter-based techniques.

Timothy Sullivan, MD  
Department of Vascular Surgery  
Cleveland Clinic  
Cleveland, Ohio

Lowering cholesterol in high risk individuals and populations  

This multi-authored book, edited by Basil M. Rifkind, “... is intended to be of interest to the several disciplines that relate to its various aspects, including primary care physicians, internal medicine practitioners, cardiologists, pediatricians, epidemiologists, public health physicians, clinical chemists, dietitians and nurses involved in preventive care.” These stated goals have been well accomplished in perhaps the best book of its kind that I have read.

There is an enormous amount of misinformation and controversy in the field of lipid management. Although the National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP) Guidelines (Adult Treatment Panels I and II) published in 1988 and 1993 outline a practical approach to the diagnosis and management of lipid disorders, many questions remain unanswered. The first chapter of this book helps the clinician to interpret the NCEP guidelines and also addresses a number of areas not well covered in the guidelines, such as the role of HDL cholesterol, small dense LDL particles, obesity and the insulin resistance syndrome,
hypertriglyceridemia, diabetes, apolipoproteins, Lp(a), and the potential dangers of low cholesterol. There are other chapters on the controversial topics of cholesterol lowering and total mortality, the role of lipid management in the elderly, and cholesterol lowering in women. These chapters review the available scientific data and clarify many of the confusing issues that are written frequently about in the lay press.

The usual subjects of secondary prevention of coronary heart disease, regression of atherosclerosis, and the pathophysiology and evolution of the atherosclerotic plaque are reviewed. There are chapters that examine the role that population and community-based strategies have on lowering cholesterol in high-risk patients and populations. “Slow and gradual” change in a culture can lead to “large and rapid changes in coronary mortality rate.” The important concern of cost-effective programs designed to lower serum cholesterol are discussed in the last chapter of the book. The expense of programs to screen and treat hyperlipidemia are reviewed, as well as methodologic considerations in performing a cost-effective analysis.

The section on diet management is exceptional. Not only is there a thorough review of current diet recommendations, but there is also an extensive chapter on how one goes about implementing these changes, something that is generally lacking in books and monographs on cholesterol lowering. There is a list of resources for both professionals and patients who wish to read more about cholesterol and dietary modification. The chapter on drug therapy gives a brief and practical summary of the available cholesterol lowering medications. The section on drug combinations answers many of the questions that practitioners have about the efficacy and safety of the various combinations of agents that are used to lower serum cholesterol and triglycerides. Surprisingly, nothing is mentioned about the use of fish oils for hypertriglyceridemic patients.

This book presents everything you need to know about lipids in a clear and concise manner and answers many commonly asked questions succinctly. The text accomplishes all of the goals outlined in the preface admirably and is highly recommended for physicians and other health providers caring for patients with coronary and peripheral artery disease.

Jeffrey W. Olin, DO
The Cleveland Clinic Foundation

Aging: a natural history

This attractive book on the biology of aging is #57 of the Scientific American Library Series devoted to a variety of scientific topics. As would be expected, it is richly illustrated in color on virtually every page and written in an entertaining style intended to appeal to a well-educated lay person. One of the authors (Ricklefs) is a Professor of Biology at the University of Pennsylvania whose expertise is in ecology and population genetics. The second author (Finch) is a geron-
High blood levels of triglycerides are most often associated with high levels of the two most important triglyceride-rich lipoproteins; chylomicrons and very low density lipoprotein (VLDL). The main role of these lipoproteins is to transport triglycerides and other types of lipids, such as cholesterol, in the circulation. Triglycerides are composed of three molecules of fatty acids attached to a glycerol molecule. Chylomicrons are formed in the intestine after a meal.