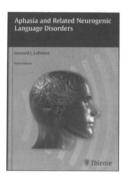APHASIA AND RELATED NEUROGENIC LANGUAGE DISORDERS. FOURTH EDITION. 2011. Edited by Leonard L. LaPointe. Published by Thieme Medical Publishers, Inc. 286 pages. C$65 approx.

Rated ★★★★☆

This is the fourth edition of this book edited and written mostly by speech pathologists, with either a scientist or clinician profile. Compared to previous edition, the content has been reformatted to respond to comments of previous readers and users: for example, chapters on language pragmatics or quality of life and counselling have been added. The upgraded graphic presentation of the book contains more illustrations, photos and tables. The book was also written with a clear pedagogical perspective which is illustrated by the use of case study, discussed questions or mini-test at the end of each chapter. Little inserts ("sidebar") within the text also assure that the reader has the information put in context.

The book is organised into three sections: Foundations and Practicalities, Assessment and Treatment, and Related Cognitive-Language Disorders. Starting with a rather basic review of brain anatomy, the volume provides an excellent review of theories, models and classification systems of aphasia in a concise, though enlightening, easy to read text. In order to embrace a larger view of aphasia and its functional impact, this new edition also includes chapters pertaining to the humanistic basics of language as well as multicultural and multilinguistic issues in the care of subjects with aphasia. In the second sections, theoretical background of each aspects of language (e.g. naming, comprehension, reading, writing, etc) is consigned into separated chapters along with a detailed discussion of their assessment. Strengths and limits of different aphasia batteries or tests are well exposed as well as the principles guiding treatment. Very practical information such as available resources for patients, families and clinicians (e.g. list of aphasia and related disorders organisations) or available assistive technologies to improve communication and their value is provided. Finally, the last section is dedicated to related cognitive disorders such as right hemisphere damage, dementia and traumatic brain injury. These chapters expand the view of aphasia to include other possible related disorders that either co-occur or cause the language disorder. Although accurate, the information contained in these chapters is general and basic.

In view of the emphasis of the book on assessment and rehabilitation of specific attributes of language, it will be much appreciated by anyone training or working in the field of speech pathology. It will also be of interest for any physician implicated in cognitive neurology or rehabilitation. For those individuals, the rating of this book would certainly be ****. However, the general neurologist or student may find the book either too detailed and specialised (in the second section) or either too general (**).

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DECISION MAKING FOR MINIMALLY INVASIVE SPINE SURGERY. 2011. Edited by: Faheem A. Sandhu, Jean-Marc Voyadzis, Richard G. Fessler. Published by Thieme Medical Publishers, Inc. 216 pages. C$75 approx.

Rated ★★☆☆

The authors state that the goal of this book "...is to provide a comprehensive look at the current advantages and limitations of minimally invasive spinal procedures...to guide both novice and experienced spine surgeons in deciding on the optimal treatment strategy for a given spinal problem." I think the goal, if accomplished, would result in quite a useful text. Unfortunately, that primary goal has only been partially achieved.

The book is divided into 14 chapters with decompressive and fusion procedures discussed in an anatomic arrangement beginning with the cervical spine. Also included are chapters on stereotactic spinal radiosurgery, instrumentation systems, image guidance, and future advances in minimally invasive (MI) surgery. I think this book is best suited for the moderately experienced MI spinal surgeon looking for some ideas about where to next apply these increasingly common techniques. Apart from receiving some inspiration, the novice MI surgeon will be otherwise frustrated with the lack of detailed descriptions of operative techniques and the paucity of case examples (typically only one per chapter). What struck me most was the lack of comments regarding complication avoidance or expert experiences with "tips and tricks" to help someone just beginning to adopt these techniques smoothen out their learning curve. I think these small details are critical to know when starting, and failure to learn them is the main reason why some surgeons abandon these techniques after only one or two frustrating experiences.

The anatomical arrangement of the text also does not lend itself to the novice MI surgeon. The first chapters discuss cervical procedures, but this is not the place where one should begin their MI experience. From the learning point of view, it may have been more appropriate to begin with some philosophy behind MI spine surgery as well as a discussion of the available literature comparing MI surgery with conventional open techniques, rather than having this discussion at the beginning of each and every chapter. Minimally invasive lumbar discectomy does not come up until Chapter 5, but is typically the first procedure performed by most emerging MI spinal surgeons.

Advanced surgeons, looking to expand their indications for these techniques, will find the discussions of choosing MI fusions over conventional approaches to be sorely lacking in detail with too few examples to be useful. The algorithms at the beginning of each chapter are fairly basic and lack any usefulness to the experienced or expert MI surgeon who may have a number of MI techniques within their arsenal and thus require assistance with the decision-making process. On the other hand, an emerging MI spinal surgeon has too few of these techniques at their disposal as thus these algorithms are not helpful for these surgeons either.