Review of: “Children’s surgery a worldwide history” by John G. Raffensberger

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To write a book about the worldwide history of a surgical specialty, namely Pediatric Surgery, is an enormous undertaking. John G. Raffensberger took this challenge and wrote with a number of collaborators the first comprehensive book on *Children’s Surgery, A Worldwide History*, published by McFarland & Company in 2012. The 339-page softback book is a wealth of excellent chapters and a large list of references for interested readers. It is composed of two parts; the first is entitled “*In the Beginning*”. It leads the reader in 19 chapters from the first written documents on Aboriginal Surgery to the Egyptian’s Papyri and the famous carving of a circumcision in a Saqqara pyramid and further on to detailed historical evidence of the emerging pediatric surgery around the world and in all different cultures. Of course, the impressive development of pediatric surgery in Europe and the USA is in the center of the last few chapters well acknowledging the important impact of the related specialties too, among them primarily pediatrics and anesthesia. The last three chapters of this part cite relevant and important books from the 19th and 20th century, published from European and American pediatric surgeons. Unfortunately, the very valuable contribution of French pediatric surgeons to the history of our specialty is missed, and the important book of L. Ombredanne “*Precis Clinique et Operatoire de Chirurgie Infantile*” published in 1932 is not even mentioned.

The second part is entitled “*Specific Conditions and Treatment*” and is composed of 18 chapters, 12 of them written by very experienced American or Canadian pediatric surgeons. Again, each chapter outlines very nicely the history of the specific condition up to the recent state of the art therapy. Sometimes, American views are a bit predominant, such as in the Wilm’s tumor chapter, where the SIOP strategy is mentioned but recent success of nephron sparing surgery in unilateral tumors based on preoperative chemotherapy is lacking. Of course, not all parts of pediatric surgery can be covered in such a book. However, it seemed a little disappointing that the impact of pediatric surgeons, especially from the German speaking countries on the history of treatment of skeletal trauma in children describing techniques to the special needs and the typical bone growing properties of this age group is lacking and would have been worthy of an extra chapter.

The black and white historical illustrations in both parts of the book illustrate nicely how the variety of pathologies has been seen in the past and document very well the search for the best surgical therapy.

Bottom line: This unique book is designed specifically to illuminate the History of Pediatric Surgery in the world. It offers a huge amount of information and a large list of references for interested readers, not only pediatric surgeons and pediatricians but also historians and others interested in the child care field.

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