Evolution of Thoracic Surgery in Canada

Jean Deslauriers, Bill Nelems, F. Griffith Pearson. Decker Intellectual Properties, Hamilton, ON, Canada, 2015. \$250 Standard Edition, \$500 Limited Edition, pages: 432. ISBN: 978-0-615-71751-7

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Thoracic surgery is still in its infancy as a standalone specialty. The nature and morbidity of diseases of the thorax have necessitated an advanced level of medical knowledge and technology which has developed over the past century. The textbook *Evolution of Thoracic Surgery in Canada* expands on the Canadian experience in treating thoracic disease and creating a specialty recognized by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

The text is published in two editions, the standard edition in this review and a leather-bound limited edition with colour illustrations and signed by the authors. All proceeds from sales will be directed towards a foundation to support research and education in Canadian thoracic surgery.

Before expanding on the content of the text, it is important to highlight the authors who, along with their mentors, directly played key roles in the Canadian leadership and innovations outlined within. Drs. Deslauriers, Nelems, and Pearson have been engaged in illustrious careers in thoracic surgery and are still actively involved at national and international conferences. Certain chapters and sections of the text were written by guest authors, for example, the chapters on anesthesia and women in surgery. These chapters are authored by thoracic anesthesiologists and female thoracic surgeons, respectively, which adds credibility and provides additional firsthand knowledge to the subjects being discussed.

The textbook can easily be divided into four sections. After a short section paying tribute to several Canadian icons in thoracic surgery, the ensuing chapters are dedicated to the history of treatments for specific thoracic

disease processes. This narrative spans from tuberculosis treatment in the pre-antibiotic era to the development of lung transplant programs. The selected topics are a good representation of the scope of thoracic surgery in Canada and are rich in detail. There are several diagrams in each chapter describing landmark experiments or procedures and highlighting specific Canadian surgeons who have directly contributed to the evolution in the treatment of the specific disease.

The next section describes the evolution of thoracic surgery as a specialty and training program in Canada. This section is particularly interesting, since, unlike some other countries, thoracic surgery in Canada has divorced itself completely from cardiac and vascular surgery. Furthermore, thoracic surgery in Canada is now delivered almost exclusively by specialized regional centres with surgeons dedicated to this subspecialty. The circumstances surrounding these decisions are fascinating and described in detail.

Chapters in the final section are devoted to research, nursing, anesthesia, women in thoracic surgery, and an overview of the thoracic surgery teams across Canada. The chapter on anesthesia outlines the challenges associated with open pneumothorax and lung isolation techniques. This chapter is followed by short biographies of some of the most influential individuals in thoracic anesthesia.

In terms of content, it is obvious that the authors performed an extensive search not only by reviewing relevant literature, but also by conducting personal interviews and travelling extensively to find the historical documents included in the text. For example, the text includes sections of the medical chart belonging to the first patient in Canada to receive a successful lung transplant, and there are photos of artwork by Dr. Norman Bethune from the 1930s. There are several appendices at the end of

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the book which show some of the background documents and provide an excellent supplement to the text. This novel text covers thoracic surgical history to a level of detail not found in other mainstream textbooks.

In summary, *Evolution of Thoracic Surgery in Canada* describes exactly what the title suggests. The book is directed primarily towards practicing thoracic surgeons and trainees in Canada, but it could also be valuable as a library reference for educational programs in any branch of chest

medicine. Other interested readers may well include individuals with an interest in medical history or physicians who wish to know more about the training system and thoracic surgery delivery in Canada. While a medical background is helpful, especially in chapters with added technical content, most of the book can be enjoyed by readers without medical training.

Conflicts of interest None declared.