

# Preface

Surgery can no more be learned from text books than can cycling or swimming. Similarly, hardly any other discipline is both a teaching and learning profession with such a close teacher—pupil relationship. But rarely does the young surgeon of today have the opportunity to gain enough continuous practice under supervision to the point of reaching subcortical implementation. The restrictions of working-time reduction, rare opportunities to practice techniques on laboratory animals, and the early division of surgery into subspecialties have completely changed the face of mandatory training guidelines for basic surgical operations. As a result, the young surgeon rarely gets to see many an operation, and those operations in which he has managed to gather a greater amount of personal experience are few and far between. Even surgical simulators, which are becoming increasingly available and provide excellent training opportunities, especially in the field of laparoscopic surgery, cannot convey the entire spectrum of basic surgical operations. In some specific fields they do allow manual skills and tactile coordination to be practiced, but cannot provide broad surgical expertise together with the understanding and mastering of standard operative techniques. Alongside video films, surgical atlases are therefore the most important sources of information for the young surgeon when it comes to practicing all the stages of certain operations.

The concept of this surgical atlas is directed toward presenting the most common 16 general and 150 special operations of everyday surgical practice to surgeons in training, to students as well as to qualified surgeons. In this respect, it is neither my intention with this single-volume atlas to vie with the more detailed, multi-volume surgical atlases nor to undermine the essential principle of specializa-

tion. Its content is general surgery—not that which remains after separation of the specialist disciplines, but rather that which a general surgeon from the respective specialist disciplines must learn in order to stand his ground as a surgeon.

We are glad that this concept has proven itself to the extent that an English edition is now available. The aim of this surgical atlas is to serve trainee surgeons as a reference book, to allow them to learn new things, and to arouse their curiosity to learn more. But even qualified surgeons may use the opportunity to recall a technique they have already learned and to compare standards. For easy memorization and mental preparation of the respective operations, all the operative stages are structured and schematized so that the continuity of the operation is divided into labeled and reproducible single steps. Just as racing drivers mentally prepare themselves before the race by imagining each individual leg of the race course, the surgeon should, before any operation, recall before his or her mind's eye each operative stage step by step so as to proceed only along familiar lines at the operating table.

We are grateful to the staff of Thieme Publishers for their support during the preparation of this English edition. But above all we should also like to thank Mr. Grahame Larkin for his excellent work in translating this atlas into English. We are looking forward to an equally favorable English-speaking readership of this *Atlas of General Surgery*.

Volker Schumpelick