The War Injuries of the Upper Extremity

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Series Editors
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The War Injuries of
the Upper Extremity

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Foreword

The editors are proud and happy to welcome the two host editors for volume 16, Joel Engel, Sheba Medical Center, Tel-Hashomer and Isidor Kessler, Kaplan Hospital, Rechovoth. Both authors are members of the Tel-Aviv University, Sackler School of Medicine. Unfortunately, war surgery has not lost its threatening actuality in many parts of the world and even nowadays there is no guarantee that mankind will be spared large-scale conflicts in the next decades. It is therefore most important to learn from the experienced how to deal with these compound injuries of the upper extremities rather unusual in our civilian way of life and very common under combat conditions. The editors and their contributors deal with the subject very comprehensively and competently and the editors of Progress in Surgery hope and believe that this volume will receive the attention it certainly deserves.

M. Allgwer, Basel

Preface

The 1967 Middle East conflict (The Six-Day War), the War of Attrition from 1969 to 1971 and the October 1973 War caused over 10,000 injuries on the Israeli side. By a decree of the Israeli Ministry of Health five Hand Surgery units were created to take care of the wounded, very much like the five units established in the US during World War II. This fact created a situation where rather few people gained rather extensive experience. The mortality rate among injured soldiers in World War II was 4.8%, in Korea 2.5% and in Vietnam 1.0%, which was also the mortality rate in Israel in the 1973 War. This rather low mortality rate is attributed mostly to a more
efficient and rapid evacuation of the wounded from the battlefield to the hospital. We believe that achieving good results has to do with this factor more than any other.

This book is written by a group of authors from the various disciplines involved in the treatment of the war wounded: Hand Surgeons, Orthopedic Surgeons, Plastic Surgeons, Vascular Surgeons, Rehabilitation and Physical Medicine people, etc. Their contributions form part II of the book. Part I was written by nonsurgeons who worked in close contact with the surgeon. The reader will find, for example, a chapter dealing with treatment and prevention of infection by antibiotics. It goes without saying that the best way to prevent contamination of explosion wounds in our view is to abstain from fighting fellow men.

This is not meant to be a comprehensive work, but is intended rather to illuminate the most frequently encountered problems of war surgery. The subjects dealt with relate only to special, aspects of war surgery. A basic knowledge of the surgeon in the field of soft and bone tissue of the upper extremity is taken for granted.

The reader will encounter in the book War Surgery in its broadest sense, from a single bomb exploding in a supermarket to a large-scale armed conflict.

Preface

Naturally, the wounds inflicted by a high-velocity missile treated in an overcrowded hospital in wartime will be dealt with in a different manner than the low-velocity bullet fired from a revolver during a robbery, or a home-made bomb exploded in a movie by guerillas.

Army men know that the best way to lose the next war is to study the previous one. We surgeons have the advantage that in Medicine, progress is a continuous process, and the knowledge acquired may be applied occasionally during wartime. It is hoped that this book will be a useful tool in such an event, and not be a historical document only.

The editors are grateful to their respective staffs who assisted in preparing this book. Gratitude is also expressed to our wives for their encouragement and patience.

Joel Engel and Isdor Kessler, Tel-Aviv