

Book Review

The History of Cesarean Section

Authors: Samuel Lurie (Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Edith Wolfson Medical Center, Holon, Tel Aviv University, Israel)

The book offers a fascinating medical history on Cesarean Section to both obstetricians and the medical community alike. It begins from the Book of Genesis, from the early days of Babylon and ancient Egypt, and displays in colorful, yet in historical and medical accuracy, the development of the concepts, art, and opinions that have accompanied it from the outset to its expansion into a mainstream general medical practice performed in the West and the world over.

Samuel Lurie successfully interweaves the development of Cesarean section with his in-depth scientific knowledge and the many years of experience he has in the field of obstetrics and gynecology – a marriage that provides the book with the highest scientific merits and its historical interest. The sources are widely varied, and the book is possibly the largest and most extensive collection of historical sources ever gathered by an expert in the field. The sources on which Lurie relies are primal – handwritings and mainly unique illustrations that enable ordinary readers to have their own impressions and obtain a full scientific and historical understanding.

The first chapter of the book portrays the historical sequence of C-Section, from its earliest days to the present day. For the reader, this chapter is a gateway to the next chapters that cover separate periods of time.

The distinctive chapters of the book describe the reference to the concept of C-Section in ancient Babylon, an issue studied very moderately to this day (Chapter 4), as well as the struggle that proponents of the Section had with its opponents (Chapter 11), and finally, the entrancing chapter on the history of the method of performing the Section in "Kaihura-Uganda" in the 19th Century (Chapter 15).

The book is an easy read, and its medical terms are accompanied by detailed explanations, as the transition between the historical periods successively showcases the subject with captivating fluency.

For medical historians, this book can be a source of pure joy as well as an established and reliable body of research related to the history of Caesarian Section.

It should be noted that in his book, Lurie dispels a few historical truths that were prevalent in the past on this subject, particularly in the description of the origin of Caesarian Section in the mythological reference to Julius Caesar – an association dismissed by the author and backed by explanations and presentations of the verified historical facts related to it.

The book is highly recommended and may even be appealing for the wider audience who has an interest in this subject, going back to the dawn of the history of humanity.

Review provided by Prof. Shifra Shvarts, Moshe Prywes Center for Medical Education, Faculty of Health Sciences, Ben Gurion University of the Negev.