

Guest editorial

Orthopaedics

J A SHIPLEY, MB ChB, MMed(Orth)

Professor, Department of Orthopaedics, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein

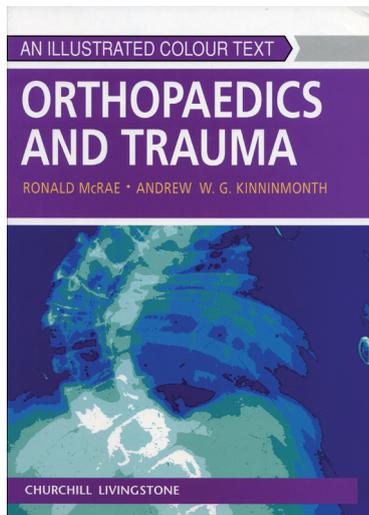
Raised in England and Kenya, Professor Shipley graduated MB ChB at UCT. He specialised in orthopaedics at the University of the Free State and developed a special interest in spinal surgery. He is currently Professor of Orthopaedics at UFS, and President Elect of the South African Orthopaedic Association.

Orthopaedic surgery is one of the most rapidly expanding specialties, and it is often difficult for even orthopaedic surgeons to keep up to date with advances in other fields of the same specialty. This must apply even more to the general practitioner, especially one who qualified some years ago.

This issue of *CME* is an attempt to summarise the present state of practice on a number of common orthopaedic problems for the family doctor. The articles simplify complex issues and should be regarded as guidelines, but a clear understanding of the basics of a condition does simplify decision-making and the recognition of unusual cases that require referral.

Orthopaedics is a long-term subject. The initial consultation is only a single point in the evolution of a condition, and the natural history of physiological and pathological processes such as growth, ageing and disease is often unpredictable. Patient observation is the key to much of our work and many cases need to be followed for weeks, months or years to define a trend which may or may not lead to surgery. Precipitate decisions are seldom necessary in elective orthopaedics, but good communication with the patient is always essential.

I would like to thank the authors of the articles in this issue for their contributions. They are all highly respected, very busy specialists in their fields of interest, with many other demands in their lives. Their generosity in sharing their time and expertise is appreciated.



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