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Retired surgeon pens “masterly account” of transplantation history

PITTSBURGH—David Hamilton’s *A History of Organ Transplantation: Ancient Legends to Modern Practice* is a comprehensive and ambitious exploration of transplant surgery. “Hamilton has written a history of transplantation that is unmatched in its scope, perceptiveness and readability,” stated Clyde Barker, M.D. and Thomas E. Starzl, M.D., Ph.D., in the volume’s Foreword. “The masterly account he has crafted comes at an appropriate time, since organ transplantation has now become widely accepted as the best therapy for many otherwise fatal diseases.”

Organ transplantation is one of the longest continuous medical endeavors in history. Moreover, no other medical enterprise has had so many multiple interactions with other fields, including biology, ethics, law, government, and technology.

Exploring the medical, scientific, and surgical events that led to modern transplant techniques, Hamilton argues that progress in successful transplantation required a unique combination of multiple methods, bold surgical empiricism, and major immunological insights in order for surgeons to develop an understanding of the body’s most complex and mysterious mechanisms. Progress was nonlinear, sometimes reverting and sometimes significantly advancing through luck, serendipity, and helpful accidents of nature.

Hamilton is a retired transplant surgeon and honorary senior lecturer at the Medical School of St. Andrews University, where he teaches medical history. He is author of two previous books, *The Monkey Gland Affair* and *The Healers: A History of Medicine in Scotland*.

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