

Preface

In the last two decades, there has been an increasing interest in obstetric perineal and anal sphincter trauma. This can be largely attributed to innovations in imaging, as it was the development of anal endosonography that led to the diagnosis of unrecognised anal sphincter trauma during childbirth. These sonographic injuries were initially considered to be occult, but it has now been established that the vast majority are in fact visible at the time of childbirth but remain undiagnosed. Consequently, attention is now focused on structured training programmes and hands-on workshops to improve understanding of anatomy and repair of perineal and anal sphincter trauma.

However, despite primary repair of anal sphincter injuries, the outcome is not universally optimal, and research on the ideal management continues. This highlights the need to identify risk factors in order to minimise the development of perineal and anal sphincter trauma.

This textbook aims not only to address these issues but also to provide in-depth information about anatomy and pathophysiology. In addition, other issues such as female genital mutilation, the management of faecal incontinence and medicolegal implications are also covered.

In producing this book, we would like to acknowledge our mentors for their teaching and inspiration, the patients who made us question our practice and the research fellows who contributed to the research. We would like to thank the multidisciplinary authors for their timely submission of chapters; last but not least we would like to extend our appreciation to our families for their perseverance and understanding.

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