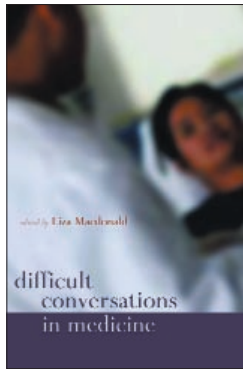


Difficult Conversations in Medicine

Edited by Liza Macdonald
Oxford University Press 2004
Price £19.95. Pp 231
ISBN 0198527748

Difficult Conversations in Medicine sets itself quite a challenge by aiming to deal with difficult communication tasks in medicine. It not only rises to the challenge but does so admirably, delivering a most informative guide to the topic.

It is divided into 16 chapters, each beginning with a brief overview and ending with an up-to-date reference list. Most chapters contain tables highlighting key points which act as an aide-memoire. Early chapters emphasize basic communication skills such as active listening, open questioning, and responding to cues. Subsequent chapters focus on a variety of communication scenarios including breaking bad news, talking to adolescents, collusive relatives, and the bereaved. There is a very helpful chapter dedicated to



coping with strong emotions and difficult personalities, co-authored by Peter Maguire, an international expert on doctor-patient communication.

Where this book wins for me is in its willingness to take a global view of communication in the 21st century. It does this by tackling ethical and legal aspects of communication as well as addressing communication with people from ethnic minorities. The latter topic is dealt with thoroughly and sensitively in chapter 12 and would be of value to all who practise medicine in a multicultural society.

In the final analysis, this is a compact yet comprehensive practical guide to all major communication tasks we are faced with in medicine today. In my opinion, it is an essential book for medical students, doctors and allied health care professionals – not one to be left to gather dust on the bookshelf but one to be referred to repeatedly throughout one's career.

Nusrat U Mir, The Longley Centre, Sheffield

Diffuse Lung Disease: A Practical Approach

Edited by Robert P Baughman,
Roland M du Bois, Joseph P Lynch,
Athol U Wells
Arnold 2004
Price £85.00. Pp 294
ISBN 0340810149

Diffuse lung diseases are in general uncommon so that one clinician may not have a huge experience of investigating and managing them. There have also been changes in the classification of the idiopathic interstitial pneumonias which can make this subject daunting. A new book dedicated to this complex area is therefore welcome.

This is a multi-authored, predominantly American, book with three main sections. The first is a general overview of the clinical approach, diagnosis and classification of diffuse lung diseases. This includes an excellent section on radiological evaluation which gives practical advice on the role of imaging, particularly computed tomography, in the diagnostic algorithm. The second section considers eleven diseases in more detail. These include the two commonest; sarcoidosis and idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF) or cryptogenic fibrosing alveolitis (CFA). Some conditions, e.g. eosinophilic pneumonias, are surprisingly omitted but a chapter on bronchiolitis, albeit interesting, may be considered more as an airway disease than a diffuse (interstitial) lung disease.

The third section gives illustrative histories with commentaries and is entertaining as well as being informative – one almost wishes it were longer.

This book will primarily be of value to respiratory medicine physicians and, although expensive, provides practical up-to-date information for managing these difficult cases. However, it highlights that currently there is no evidence base for effective treatment for many of these conditions. The only large randomized treatment study in IPF or CFA to be published for a long time failed to show benefit in any primary end-points with interferon- γ treatment. There are few ongoing trials and this should be a spur to UK respiratory physicians to set up and/or participate in multicentre studies of these debilitating diseases.

Helen Booth, Middlesex Hospital, London

Developmental Vascular Biology

Edited by Gerald P Schatten
Academic Press 2004
Price £99.95. Pp 320
ISBN 0121531627

The subtle importance of the endothelium is often underestimated, yet it is of profound significance as the arbiter of much cardiac and vascular disease. It plays a critical role in the mechanics of blood flow, the regulation of coagulation, leucocyte adhesion, and vascular smooth muscle cell growth. For years

the endothelium was thought of as an inert single layer of cells. However, this dynamic tissue performs many other active functions and this important new text explores the relevant issues.

The focus is on how the intricacies of basic research findings in vascular and endothelial cell biology translate to clinical practice. Indeed, the endothelium is presented as both the source and target of novel therapeutic concepts. This means that diseases such as atherosclerosis, hypertension, arterial stenosis, diabetes, and inflammatory and immune processes that involve the vascular wall can be treated by drawing from the endothelium and modifying it.

From the developmental biology angle, contemporary topics such as stimulating angiogenesis, cloning and stem cells as well as the traditional areas of cellular and molecular development of the vascular endothelium are all explored and explained.

Coverage includes up-to-date research on lipoproteins, leucocytes, prostacyclin and thromboxane, the role of the endothelium in gene therapy and the pathobiology of plaque rupture. This book is very interesting and relevant for both researchers and clinicians because it highlights how the understanding of low-level pathophysiology and endothelial biology can make a huge difference in the clinical setting.

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