

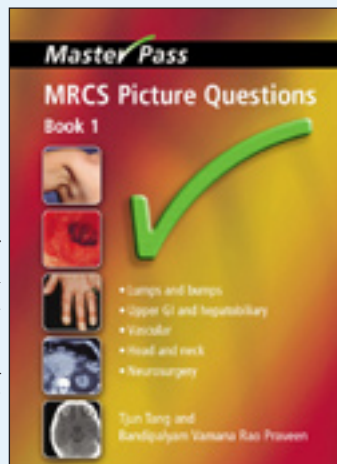
### MRCS Picture Questions Book 1

Edited by Tjun Tang and BV Praveen  
Radcliffe 2006

Price £27.99. Pp 225  
ISBN 1 85775 749 1

This book, intended for candidates who are soon to sit their surgical membership examinations, covers five major areas – upper gastrointestinal/hepatopancreatobiliary, head and neck, vascular, neurosurgery and ‘lumps and bumps’.

For each of the 90 surgical topics covered, the reader is presented with one or more photographs, some background clinical information and a series of ques-



tions about the condition shown in the photographs. The photographs show physical signs, radiological images or pathological specimens. One of the great strengths of this book is that it provides detailed answers to all of the questions put to the reader. This makes it a very useful revision book rather than just being concerned with ‘spot diagnosis’.

The ‘lumps and bumps’ section is valuable as it illustrates several cutaneous lesions which I suspect many senior house officers will not have seen in surgical clinics. The neurosurgical section is brief but shows all of the important

cranial computed tomography findings that a basic surgical trainee could be expected to recognize.

This book is very appropriate for MRCS revision but I think that candidates for any surgical examination would find this book useful. It may be of particular interest to those candidates who sit the MRCS exam without the 2 years surgical experience that was previously deemed a prerequisite.

I was impressed with this book and would highly recommend it as an MRCS revision aid. However, those who might wish to buy it need to be aware that this is the first book in a series of three and the complete surgical curriculum is not covered in this volume.

*John Scollay, Queen Margaret Hospital, Dunfermline*

### The Medical Student Career Handbook

Edited by Elizabeth Cottrell, Christele Rebora, Mark Williams  
Radcliffe 2006

Price £17.95. Pp 165  
ISBN 184619 077 0

As a fourth year medical student surrounded by rumours regarding the new Modernising Medical Careers (MMC) training programme, this book was useful in providing career guidance in a systematic and concise manner with good illustrations.

The highlights of the book include an explanation of what MMC involves, the application procedures for foundation year 1 (F1) as well as details of salary bandings. From my experience many medical students are eager to find out more about such subjects but there appears to be little information online, so this book is a handy guide. The chapter ‘Broadening your clinical experience’ is beneficial, since job applications are becoming increasingly competitive.

Short profiles of current medical specialists, which detail the nature of their work and advice on how to enter the specialty, offer good insight. Other helpful resources include advice on electives and working abroad, which are practical but I felt insufficient. Nonetheless, the references given provide a good starting point for research.

The early chapter ‘Career development toolkit’ contains a fairly comprehensive

section on matching personality traits to careers. The only disappointing aspect was the lack of a sample personal statement for foundation application – only basic advice such as ‘ensure there are no spelling mistakes’ is given.

Overall this is a well-priced guide for medical students who wish to stay one step ahead of their peers in planning their careers. It is certainly interesting and easy enough to read during revision breaks.

*Billy Cheung, King's College, London*

### Napoleon's Ulcer and other medico-historical stories

Robert Richardson  
Quiller Press 2006

Price £14.95. Pp 240  
ISBN 1904057 96 9

Robert Richardson, trained in medicine at Oxford and at the Middlesex, has had a long and distinguished career as a medical editor and author of books on medical history (as well as one novel). In this volume, he presents a group of essays, some new, others revised and updated, over a broad sweep of medicine and its history.

The first three deal with Napoleon Bonaparte and his terminal illness – he died on St Helena in 1821 – a topic that has led to all sorts of pathological speculations. By going to the detailed contemporary medical reports and especially to the description of the autopsy by the

young Italian, Dr Antommarchi, Richardson convinces us that death was the result of a bleeding benign gastric ulcer, eroding into the liver. The ulcer was described as ‘scirrhous’ in the notes, which has led to the view that this was a gastric cancer. However, benign ulcer of the stomach was not then a recognized entity – it was only described by the Frenchman Jean Cruveilhier more than 10 years later. Napoleon also had chronic hepatitis (a finding omitted from the official British autopsy report), as well as bladder stones.

Other essays cover medical aspects of the Crimean War, hair, blood, ageing, Shakespeare's sources of medical information, medical stories of Byron, Marcus Aurelius and Albrecht Durer and an account of that pioneer of military surgery, Dominique Jean Larrey. The final essay deals with the evolution of the sphygmomanometer.

Dr Richardson impresses the reader with his erudition and presents a mass of facts that I am sure will be new to readers. There is, for example, an interesting discussion about the myth of hair suddenly turning white from intense grief or fear – a physiological impossibility.

This is a book that anyone in the health professions will enjoy. It certainly lightened my commute on the train to Guy's and I can recommend it warmly.

*Harold Ellis, Guy's, King's and St Thomas' School of Biomedical Science, London*