

## Mastering Emergency Medicine: A practical guide

Chetan R Trivedy, Mathew Hall,  
Andrew Parfitt  
RSM Press 2009

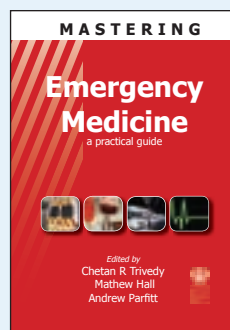
Price £39.95. Pp 492  
ISBN 978 1 85315 744 8

*Mastering Emergency Medicine* fills a gap as a revision aid to the College of Emergency Medicine (CEM) postgraduate exams – particularly MCEM part C.

The book mirrors the CEM syllabus and is set out in a logical and easy-to-follow manner, providing a useful structure for revision. The first chapter provides a generic guide to objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs) and offers information about past scenarios. After considering resuscitation and anaesthetic issues, the book then follows a broadly systems-based approach before ending with sections on communication skills, practical skills and management skills.

Each section is peppered with practice scenarios, ideal for group revision, but the authors are quick to point out that these are definitely not intended as a substitute to seeing patients in the emergency department. Particularly useful and unique are the boxes giving an examiner's mark scheme, showing exactly how each scenario would be scored in an exam. In addition, there is a section detailing the instructions given to actors assisting with the OSCE, again a useful and unusual insight.

Often neglected in other texts, but vital for the more experienced trainee, the chapter titled 'management skills' stands out. As with much of the book it is useful not just in the run up to exams but also in day-to-day practice. Here the scenarios are particularly interesting and varied, brightening revision.



The editors have compiled a splendid list of contributors, all of whom have first-hand knowledge of the CEM examinations and many of whom have recently been through the examination process, making their contributions all the more relevant.

All Royal college syllabuses are prone to frequent changes and to keep pace with these alterations some downloadable content would have been a nice addition. This could also have provided a route for delivering further practice scenarios.

While valuable for everyone working the emergency department and for the trainer organizing a mock OSCE, this title should certainly be on the bookshelf of all those preparing for the MCEM and FCEM examinations.

*Simon Leach, Northampton General Hospital, Northampton*

## Thomas Willis 1621–1675: His Life and Work

JT Hughes  
Rimes House 2009

Price £20.00. Pp 143  
ISBN 978 1 874317 03 6

Every medical student will, I hope, know about the circle of Willis, that beautiful anastomosis on the ventral aspect of the brain between the terminal branches of the internal carotid and vertebral arteries. Many will have seen, in their textbooks, its original excellent illustration by none other than Sir Christopher Wren. Sadly, few could tell you much more about Thomas Willis; yet he was one of the most brilliant medical observers of the 17th century, second only in his contributions behind William Harvey. Indeed, Sir Charles Symonds named Willis 'The Harvey of neurology'.

Dr John Hughes, a distinguished Oxford neuropathologist and well-known medical historian, has written a splendid account of the life and times of Willis, who spent much of his life in Oxford. Here he was a medical student during the civil war and his studies were interrupted by service in the Royalist regiment of members of the University. Instead of studying Hippocrates and Galen, his time was more profitably spent with personal experience of the fevers that plagued the military. As well as his illustration of 'the

circle', Willis also accurately described the blood supply of the spinal cord, gave the first account of the accessory spinal nerve, recognized achalasia of the cardia, which he successfully treated by bouginage, and gave good descriptions of, among others, asthma, emphysema and diabetes mellitus.

Dr Hughes presents us with a beautifully written and splendidly illustrated biography of a man who is obviously his hero. He describes his life, his times, his contemporaries and his numerous original contributions to our corpus of medical knowledge. He certainly makes the case for naming Willis 'The William Harvey of neurology'. *Harold Ellis, Guy's, King's and St Thomas' School of Biomedical Sciences, London*

## Differential Diagnosis (3rd edn)

Andrew T Raftery, Eric Lim,  
Andrew JK Östör  
Churchill Livingstone Elsevier 2010

Price £23.99. Pp 584  
ISBN 978 0 7020 3222 6

I wanted to like this book, but I am afraid I didn't. The title suggests that it will teach the reader to differentiate common presentations, e.g. what features make one more/less likely, but as each cause is considered in isolation, it is merely a collection of surgical sieves with history, examination and investigations.

This reference book is well laid out but the clinical presentations would be better subdivided into signs and symptoms. The book could also be improved with more room given to the common presentations, e.g. chest pain, than the less common.

There are many inconsistencies in the book, from nomenclature (Latin – English), examinations (first useful, then not), common causes simply omitted and despite the presentations being colour coded (green for common, amber for occasional, red for rare), some diseases are more common than others and should be numbered and arranged accordingly.

The section titles are somewhat confused, being both system based, e.g. lymphadenopathy and then region based, e.g. neck swellings, which leads to repetition. Indeed, around 20% of the text could be removed, as there is much repetition both between and within sections. The space saved could be used for what this book desperately needs: colour pictures.

The content is generally good, fairly accurate and I did learn some new differentials, but I think other books do the job much better. The book is an interesting idea which is poorly executed, but is most suitable as a reference for undergraduates. *David Warriner, Barnsley General Hospital, Barnsley*