

Oxford Textbook of Medicine (5th edn)

Edited by David Warrell, Timothy Cox, John Firth
Oxford University Press 2010
Price £350.00. Pp 6010
ISBN 978 0 19 920485 4



This fifth edition of the *Oxford Textbook of Medicine* in 20 years is a remarkable achievement. The preface to the first edition bemoaned the passing of its predecessor, *Price's Textbook of Medicine*. The editors justified the launch of the *Oxford Textbook of Medicine* with the belief that a comprehensive reference source was needed by 'general practitioners and specialists' to reflect the excellence of 'British clinical practice'. Tellingly, the editors in 1982 referred to a comment about the weight of the final edition of Price's Textbook: 'dinosaurs became extinct as a consequence of their sheer bulk'.

The latest *Oxford Textbook of Medicine* is three sizeable volumes presenting an

expanded text with revised chapters, colour illustrations, and an essentials section at the beginning of each chapter summarizing the main points. New chapters include stem cell biology, emerging pathogens and topical themes that include Darwinian medicine and human disasters. These latter chapters demonstrate the ever-burgeoning successes and frustrations of modern medical and social practice but it could be argued that they divert attention from the original objective to provide a comprehensive textbook of internal medicine.

The latest edition benefits from internationally drawn expert contributors – they are true leaders in their respective fields. However, the downside is that a number of chapters present more personal than evidence-based opinion – there is a notable absence of Cochrane reviews and national guideline advice. A counter is the time-limited nature of

some guidelines which underlines the major advance for this edition of *Oxford Textbook of Medicine* – it is available on line for a short period of time to purchasers. Given the price of the book, many purchasers are likely to wish for this period to be extended.

The 5th edition of the *Oxford Textbook of Medicine* remains unquestionably a superb reference book. However, any reviewer, mindful of the criticisms of Price's last edition, must ask whether such a weighty reference is still required as a book in an age of web connectivity. My selective inquiry among 'baby boomers' is a unanimous yes – evidently we are a generation of 'textual dippers'; by contrast, generation x and y are less persuaded – undoubtedly generations that are 'surfers'. Irrespective of this, the book is a masterpiece and it remains relevant to the global challenge of medicine.

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How to Pass the MRCPsych CASC

Andrew Iles, Rose Woodall, Flavia Leslie
Oxford University Press 2010
Price £24.95. Pp 218
ISBN 978 0 19 957170 3

The book is written by past clinical assessment of skills and competencies (CASC) examination candidates and an MRCPsych examiner. After explaining the layout of the CASC exam in detail, general tips for the day and the marking scheme it goes on to describe key skills required for the exam including differential diagnosis, management, risk and communication skills.

The topics section concisely covers the current MRCPsych CASC blueprint and other potential areas for examination, dividing each area into core diagnostic criteria, key phrases, information giving and essential guidelines as well as references for further reading. It also suggests how you might phrase particular questions and direct the conversation during the interview. There is also a sub-section on practical skills, e.g. mini-mental state examination, electrocardiogram interpretation and physical examination.

Where the book really excels is having ten mock examinations which mirror the CASC examination itself. Each has eight

individual stations and four paired stations, allowing candidates to try out 160 stations in total. This would be very useful for study groups. The book suggests points to cover rather than scripted responses, which the candidate can read in the topics section and adapt to the scenario itself.

Overall this is an excellent all-round book that covers the CASC syllabus, but also has very good practical tips and provides candidates with actual exam scenarios that they can practice.

Khadijah Hussain, East London NHS Foundation Trust, London

Making the Most of your Consultant Post

Medical Protection Society 2008
Pp 146
ISBN 978 1 903673034

The book's aim is to provide practical advice for the new consultant in communicating effectively with patients and colleagues, embracing self-reflection and dealing with the local politics of the future trust employer. Although not intending to be a definitive text the objectives are generally achieved. The objectives include: appreciating communication and patient safety; understanding the necessary leadership skills required to enable good teamwork and getting the

most from the job of consultant; developing a self-care approach and negotiating with management to achieve common goals.

Although the book does not answer all the many questions of the new consultant, it would be a good adjunct to advice likely to be received from work colleagues and experience obtained on the job.

As well as providing facts and summaries there are many useful tips, references and website links, highlighted by way of schematic diagrams, images and tables throughout, which supplement the text, emphasize the relevant take home messages and help lighten topics which may be difficult and tedious to present. The contents are organized in a systematic manner. The text is easy to read, presenting relevant information clearly and simply.

If there is any shortcoming it is the lack of a chapter devoted to clinical audit and how to best manage as a clinical audit lead as this is often thrust upon the new consultant.

The book is easy to use, an enjoyable read and allows the reader to readily locate relevant topics and access additional information. I would recommend it to not only new consultants in post but also to trainees preparing for consultant interviews.

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