

Pocket Prescriber 2011

Edited by Timothy RJ Nicholson,
Donald RJ Singer
Hodder Arnold 2011
Price £13.99. Pp 274
ISBN 978 1 44412 187 2

The handy, information-packed *Pocket Prescriber* has become an essential go-to for junior doctors on the wards. Listing the 500 most used drugs in a concise and accessible format, this book allows drugs to be quickly checked, reassuring the prescriber and reducing errors.

With so many medications in use, and a lack of emphasis on learning drug doses at medical school, learning to prescribe on the wards can be a challenging experience. This easily accessible book allows new doctors to get into the good habit of checking prescriptions, reducing errors

while increasing the reader's knowledge of medications. Emboldened side effects and highlighted warnings for each drug draw attention to key prescribing pitfalls.

Updated annually, the book contains the most recent information on drugs and when to use them. Particularly useful are the sections on drug selection, how to prescribe and medical emergencies. Guidelines on prescribing in emergencies are abridged to include only the most relevant information that can easily be digested at a glance. Relevant medications and the doses required are given for each situation as are example prescriptions for some of the more complicated drugs, such as insu-



lin prescribing scales and glyceryl trinitrate infusions.

Being a concise handbook some information is inevitably missed. Frequently one is still drawn to the British National Formulary for a more thorough summary of side effects and dosing, and for drugs which have not been included. Another annoyance is the over-reliance on abbreviations

which, while keeping entries short, leads to frequent referral to the glossary.

Overall this portable gem can be thoroughly recommended. Portable, concise, and well priced, this book is a purchase that will not be regretted.

Andrew J Taylor, Reema Patel, UCL Hospitals, London

Long Cases for the Final FRCR 2B

Rebecca Hanlon, John Curtis,
Hulya Wiesmann, David White,
Caren Landes, Val Gough
Oxford University Press 2011
Price £29.95. Pp 230
ISBN 978 0 19 959000 1

This comprehensive self-assessment revision book consists of over 40 long cases which simulate the type and complexity of questions encountered in the FRCR 2B exam. The cases are a mixture of conditions frequently seen in FRCR as well as more complex cases covering all imaging modalities and specializations. Each question consists of high quality images with a short history. The answers consist of observations and interpretations of the radiological signs followed by the diagnosis or differential. Several of the images are in colour too. This is followed by notes on radiological and clinical management and then a section on the key points of the disease. All questions are well referenced. At the end of the book there is an appendix covering a useful checklist for the rapid reporting section.

The authors, who have been involved in running high quality FRCR courses for many years, are to be congratulated in producing such an excellent quality book which is easy and fun to read and hits the nail on the head when preparing for the FRCR 2B. I enjoyed reading the book, revising conditions and learnt some new things too. I highly recommend this book

as an essential tool in the preparation for the FRCR 2B exam.

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Oxford Handbook of Pain Management

Edited by Peter Brook, Jayne Connell,
Tony Pickering
Oxford University Press 2011
Price £32.95. Pp 366
ISBN 978 0 19 929814 3

The *Oxford Handbook of Pain Management* is a remarkable book. In one pocket-sized volume you get the vast world of pain management – from labour analgesia to opioid pharmacology, from advanced nerve block techniques to the principles of psychodynamics. The breadth of this book – the combined wisdom of 45 specialists – is breathtaking but it is by no means perfect.

The format is familiar – pocket sized, beautifully presented in bullet points (similar to the *Oxford Handbook of Medicine*) and split into two sections. The first, acute pain, describes basic principles including pharmacology of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and local anaesthetics proceeding through general management techniques into specific clinical situations (the chapters on pain management for the patient on long-term opioids are welcome reading in this difficult to manage group). Section two on chronic pain is unsurprisingly longer and

strides through the myriad of areas with ease – I especially liked the chapters on psychological therapies, physical therapies (much-neglected areas) and specific situations including chronic pain in the elderly and functional pain syndromes (e.g. fibromyalgia). These complex conditions are described thoroughly and succinctly, explaining complex and often ill-understood areas.

However, there are problems; occasionally in the text, sometimes with the format. The chapter on specific nerve blocks gives passing reference to the use of ultrasound – which is superior and safer to other techniques – and explaining block details without diagrams does not work. Many trainees will access video media online for this information (as I do). The evidence behind techniques is patchy, and entirely lacking when describing surgical treatments for back pain. This is not good enough – evidence supporting and disputing surgery's place in the management of back pain is not explained or even mentioned.

I would recommend this book to trainees interested in pain as a career to refer to 'on-the-go' and it will be well thumbed by trainees of other disciplines. However, it is not perfect, and aspects of it that have already been superseded by the new media – access by smart phones and trust internet. As smart phone use increases the website or app review becomes evermore relevant.

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