

Succeeding in Your Medical Degree

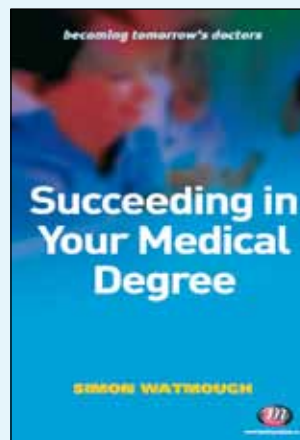
Simon Watmough
Learning Matters 2011
Price £19.99. Pp 154
ISBN 978 0 85725 397 2

Medical schools are under constant challenge to produce capable, safe and caring doctors within a time frame of 5 or 6 years. This book aims to provide current and prospective medical students with an insight into the objectives behind medical school curricula and the methods employed to achieve them. The General Medical Council's document *Tomorrow's Doctors*, the guiding force behind medical educationalist thought in the UK today, provides the basis for this book, with each chapter relating to its outcomes.

The scope extends from a description of the desired qualities of a modern doctor (such as professionalism and leadership) to the ways in which these are taught and learnt (including simulation, peer feedback and practical assessment),

and aspects of career development (such as CV building and information management in the NHS). These topics are infrequently covered in other texts, allowing this book to fill an existing niche.

The chapters, authored by a variety of clinical and non-clinical educationalists, are generally well written and informative. Case study, evidence and activity boxes aimed at complementing the text are present throughout the book. Unfortunately we felt that these added little of substance: activities risked appearing patronising, case studies frequently felt contrived and evidence was often anecdotal. The heavy use of buzz words throughout the book will not appeal to all readers, although acquisition of this vocabulary may prove useful to students writing postgraduate applications.



Extensive reading lists and tight budgets necessitate a certain degree of selectivity for medical students and in our opinion the majority will not find this book essential reading. Although *Succeeding in Your Medical Degree* is a very effective title for catching the attention of prospective or current medical students, realistically success at medical school is determined by

knowledge of the scientific basis of medicine as well as by slick and practised clinical skills. As such, attention is usually first directed elsewhere to volumes on physiology, pharmacology and clinical skills. Those with a specific interest in developing as educationalists will, however, find this book worth its £19.99 price tag.

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Oxford Case Histories in Cardiology

Rajkumar Rajendram, Javed Ehtisham,
Colin Forfar
Oxford University Press 2011
Price £39.95. Pp 412
ISBN 978 0 19 955678 6

As a book to review this is really very easy – it does 'what it says on the lid'. These 50 cases really encompass almost the whole of cardiology and include some interesting scenarios (i.e. Brugada syndrome, chronic pericarditis, post-partum cardiomyopathy, coarctation and amyloid heart disease) as well as the 'day to day' cases all too common in clinical practice (calcific aortic stenosis, pulmonary embolism and atrial fibrillation).

The cases are clearly presented in an attractive format with succinct questions and very thorough answers on turning the page. There are over 100 black and white figures and there is also an 8-page colour plate section in the centre of the book. This would be a comfortable book to work through in preparation for the MRCP or indeed, if you use the list of cases at the end of the book, as an up-to-date reference. The answers are also well

referenced and the reader is further directed to additional reading.

This is the sort of book we all dream of writing, after a few years collecting cases on the wards, but few do. I would certainly recommend this to trainees and colleagues.

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Clinical Medicine: A Clerking Companion

David Randall, Adam Feather
Oxford University Press 2011
Price £29.99. Pp 304
ISBN 978 0 19 957437 7

Clinical Medicine: A Clerking Companion aims to initiate students into the study of clinical medicine by case lore, primarily by providing guidance through the fundamentals of patient clerking. The text prompts clarification of key features of the history and reminds the student to carefully elicit signs of diagnostic relevance. Importantly, the pathophysiological bases of these symptoms and signs are also discussed. Collectively, the companion allows even inexperienced students to obtain focused, meaningful clerkings.

A host of online resources, including practice questions, model answers, annotated imaging results and clinical charts, also offer a holistic perspective of clinical medicine. The scope of this text is selective, considering only the most common diseases; consequently, supplementary texts will be inevitable necessities. Nevertheless, Randall and Feather have delivered a clear and concise, well-illustrated work-book that many will welcome.

With its A4 size, this book would make a cumbersome ward companion. However, recording all of one's clerking in this companion enables students to easily demonstrate their progressive clinical exposure, as one would do in a portfolio. Considering the limited scope of clinical medicine discussed, and its cost of £29.99, the companion may not be cost-effective, especially since many universities now mandate maintenance of bespoke portfolios, which provide similar services. Regardless, the authors must be commended for a unique text that encourages students to engage in continual and reflective clerking to refine their clinical acumen.

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