

Hepatic Encephalopathy

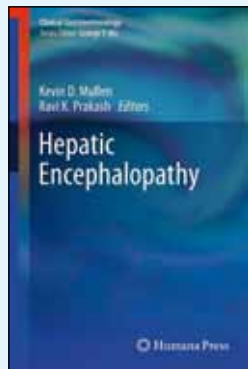
Edited by Kevin D Mullen and Ravi K Prakash

Humana Press 2012

Price £126.00. Pp 250

ISBN 978 1 61779 835 1

This is an excellent overview of all aspects of hepatic encephalopathy. It is timely in view of the increasing burden of liver disease, especially in the UK. The editors are both highly regarded in this field, with Dr Mullen in particular a world expert, and many of the contributors are also leaders in this area. There are relatively few books published on encephalopathy and certainly rarely in such exhaustive detail. The book covers patho-



physiology, diagnosis, treatment and there is a special topics section that contains chapters on driving, quality of life, nutrition and transplantation. First rate editing ensures that the narrative flows well rather than simply being a collection of review articles strung together.

Particular highlights include the chapters concerning inflammation and encephalopathy, imaging, novel treatment, and driving, and the final chapter on the future provides a good summary. A slight criticism would be the chapter on disaccharide treatment which rather overstated the case for lactulose, but perhaps this was an enthusiast's perspective on the evidence.

Overall I found *Hepatic Encephalopathy* to be a well-written, up-to-date and very interesting book that would be highly relevant to physicians who treat encephalopathy.

As the editors mention, despite this condition having a significant impact, the approach to encephalopathy is often minimalistic and I certainly believe that reading this book would improve most physicians' management. It would most obviously suit hepatologists and gastroenterologists but also those working in critical care or acute admissions units. The one drawback is the price but I think most readers would ultimately find that this investment proved good value.

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Oxford Higher Specialty Training: FRCS Trauma and Orthopaedics Viva

Edited by Nev Davies, Will Jackson, Andrew Price, Jonathan Rees, Chris Lavy
Oxford University Press 2012

Price £39.99. Pp 214

ISBN 978 0 19 964709 5

This book is targeted at higher surgical trainees who are approaching the viva component of the FRCS Trauma and Orthopaedics exam. The book is structured very much like the exam, with sections on hands and paediatrics, basic sciences, trauma and adult pathology. Each section is divided into further subsections with examples of the common questions that have been asked. As an example, a question may start with a radiograph followed by questions as to the radiographic findings, the diagnosis, pathology and finally the management of a particular problem. The following page will then have the answers which are well thought out and concise. In addition the authors have included some of the common diagrams that are asked in the exam at the end of the book.

The editors stress that the aim of the book is not to instruct the reader as to a particular method of answering a question but to help the reader develop his/her own system.

This book is an excellent aid and emphasizes the importance of not just having the facts but presenting them in a clear and

logical order. This is a very important element in succeeding in the viva component of the examination. This book is useful to read alone but I suspect will be more helpful when used in small groups. Each member of the group will benefit from practicing answering questions in a 'viva' situation but will also benefit from watching and listening to their colleagues respond to questions.

My only criticism is that some of the radiographic illustrations are either too small or of poor quality so that it can be a little difficult to see the abnormalities referred to in the questions. Hopefully this could be addressed in its next edition.

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Back Pain

Edited by Andrew Souter, Roman Cregg, Sam Chong

Oxford University Press 2012

Price £19.99. Pp 160

ISBN 978 0 19 960977 2

Back pain is a topic of endless depth and polarized opinion. This book, in the Oxford Pain Management Library series, tries to cover this in a mere 160 pages. And it very nearly succeeds. Edited by a trainee (Cregg), a clinician (Souter) and a neurologist (Chong) the perspective of this paperback is one of inclusiveness. It does not preach or hector: it gives the range of opinion the topic deserves. Multi-

disciplinary perspective dominates – there is equal space given to the nursing demands as to those of spinal surgery.

Chapter 13 on place of surgery stands out. Description of the biomechanical model (and its accepted limitations) prefaces the surgical perspective – both from the clinicians' and patients' perspective. Evidence is critically analysed and its message is clear – surgery can help some patients with back pain. Which ones it will benefit is difficult to ascertain.

The chapter on intervention tries hard to be balanced but falls into a familiar trap. There is no critical appraisal of the evidence (which is sparse) and the authors drift into familiar phrasing such as 'IDET [intradiscal electrothermic therapy] may have efficacy' and 'good controlled studies are lacking... but proponents report good benefit'. They always do – that's why they are proponents. And like chapter 13, descriptions of techniques that do not contain images are inadequate. The reader has multiple sources to garner these days. Words without pictures will turn many off.

Who would buy this book? As part of the Oxford Pain Management Library I suspect departments would be encouraged although, as is a symptom of our time, the printed word has a limited lifespan.

In short this is a collection of well-written individual pieces that struggle to gel.
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