

Kumar and Clark's Clinical Medicine (8th edn)

Edited by Parveen Kumar and Michael Clark

Saunders Elsevier 2012

Price £67.99. Pp 1352

ISBN 978 0 7020 4499 1

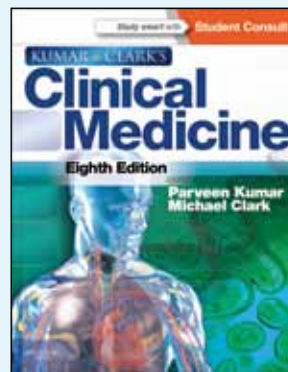
This is the eighth edition of Kumar and Clark in 15 years, which is a remarkable achievement and testament to the authors' dedication – the title of Kumar and Clark is now legendary. It is regarded by many as the 'must have' textbook for budding and qualified doctors and the 'gold standard' when compared against competitor textbooks. Previous editions have been applauded for being both comprehensive and student 'friendly'. Does the latest edition live up to the high expectation?

The short answer is yes: this edition includes much that is new including sections on protein synthesis, energy production and stem cells, 16 new contributing authors and a significant increase in online chapters to reflect the interests of the

expanded international advisory board. This expansion demonstrates the burgeoning nature of medicine and the challenge to medical students and doctors in training to identify how much and when such knowledge is required.

The latest edition offers recent references and signposts further reading. Nevertheless, a fear exists that the size of the book may seem intimidating and could turn away the intended primary audience. I tested this with current students and young doctors who confirm an increasing preference for 'surfing' the internet rather than dipping into text. So the longer term place for such textbooks may be less certain.

Kumar and Clark lives up to expectation by providing an up-to-date compendium of medical information although it is notable that preventive medicine, climate change and food security remain



largely overlooked. The detailed text, figures and tables occasionally make the pages appear cluttered, raising the question whether detailed pathophysiology might be better placed on the web in the future with the hard copy narrative directed at the clinical setting – in keeping with the original edition. The current

web-based version of Kumar and Clark is on Student Consult and includes chapters on infectious diseases and poisoning, and has animations of certain clinical procedures. The web version is clunky in use compared to other medical sites and apps.

It is churlish to criticize such a valuable and affordable resource; there is no question that the eighth edition of Kumar and Clark will be welcomed by a new generation of students and doctors.

Peter Kopelman, St George's, University of London, London

Oxford Specialist Handbooks: Paediatric Neurology (2nd edn)

Edited by Rob Forsyth and

Richard Newton

Oxford University Press 2012

Price £39.99. Pp 672

ISBN 978 0 19 960363 3

This second edition in the popular Oxford Specialist Handbook in Paediatrics series covering paediatric neurology will be useful to many doctors who deal with children and young people with neurological diseases. It encompasses a complex specialist area with ease, being designed as an accessible form of reference text. It did not feel light on detail for such a small book.

The chapters have clearly been written by practising paediatric neurologists who have written reassuring sections of text such as 'real world examination' and 'enquire of the nursing staff'. The handbook regularly cross references to other relevant sections of the book. This helps to link the first clinical problems focussed section with the later specific conditions section and vice versa. The clinical problems section will be especially useful to practicing general paediatricians at all levels as they formulate a differential diagnosis for neurological problems presenting themselves on increasingly busy

post take ward rounds. The handbook seems even better placed for paediatric neurology trainees who may be faced with calls from general paediatricians for advice. The section on consultation with other services is also highly relevant to a trainee in a specialist tertiary paediatric centre.

My only criticisms are the lack of referencing to any online sources of information for professionals or parents for at least some of the main neurological conditions and the somewhat uninspiring cover which will surely make it difficult to locate when inevitably left at the nursing station. The positives outweigh the negatives and my copy has already become well used in only a few months.

Stephen Wadams, Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Poole, Dorset

Memoirs of the 'Iodine' Surgeon

John Lionel Stretton

Llyfrau Cambria 2012

Price £14.95. Pp 294

ISBN 978 0 9568031 9 1

This fascinating book gives an interesting account of general medical and surgical practice from the late Victorian era up to the 1930s. It is the biography of John Lionel Stretton of Kidderminster. Son of a

GP, he was born in 1860, became a medical student at St. Bartholomew's and qualified Member of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1881. He became resident anaesthetist at his teaching hospital and intended on a career in surgery, but had to resign the following year in order to take over his father's practice when he became seriously ill. Stretton was also immediately appointed honorary surgeon to the local hospital and held this post until he retired in 1938. He died in 1943 at the age of 82.

This is Stratton's autobiography – its title reflects his introduction of tincture of iodine into general use. His attempt to get his book published during World War II failed, but fortunately his great grandson has now had it published, with the addition of photographs and reproduction of the author's writings.

In those days the GP surgeon's practice included trauma, mastoid surgery, Caesarean sections and the acute abdomen. The assistant was usually a nurse and the anaesthetist the newly qualified house surgeon.

Those were the days when so many of the advances we take for granted today were not even dreamed about. It is written in a lively style and makes a good read.

Harold Ellis, Guy's Hospital, London