

Oxford Textbook of Paediatric Pain

Edited by Patrick J McGrath,
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William T Zempsky
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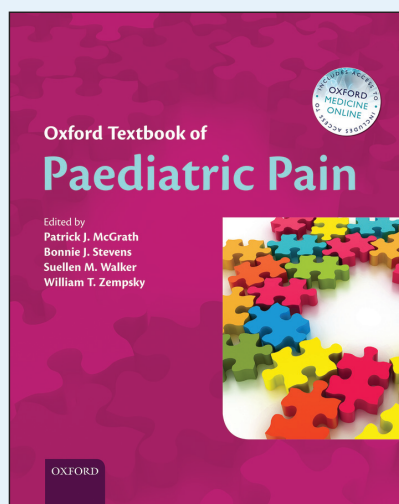
Like restaurant reviews, much interest (or mirth) can be had reading (or reviewing) those publications that are flawed. Criticizing the edit, layout or, most damningly, the text isn't heart-warming. Nor is it difficult. Criticizing this book is difficult – the *Oxford Textbook of Paediatric Pain* most definitely is not of that ilk.

So thorough, so broad and, crucially, so well written (and edited) is this text these 250 words cannot possibly do it justice. Almost 700 pages, divided into nine sections (of around five chapters) cover the history of the subject, through pharmaceutical options and interventions and

into psychological therapies. Ethics, maternal perspectives and sociodemographic chapters are thrown in for good measure, such is its reach.

Dwelling on specifics there is time spent explaining the historical context (young children do not feel pain – or so we thought back then), and insightful social and neurochemical reasoning as to why pain relief matters (it really does matter – especially to the very young).

The edit is of top quality; techniques such as neuro-axial blockade or spinal cord stimulation may benefit the child in pain but the authors leave the reader in no doubt where the limits of current evi-



dence lie. Clinicians are obliged to use this information wisely when seeking consent. This is no cheerleader for a new technology or new drug – no, it keeps its balance throughout.

Paediatric pain services are underdeveloped in the UK. Trainees in pain management are only now routinely exposed to the unique challenge of managing pain in children. This book should be essential for all thinking of practising in the field – it informs us what we know, and, most crucially, why it matters. I endorse it wholeheartedly.
Richard Griffiths, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, Kent

History of Medicine: All That Matters

Tim Hall
Hodder 2013
Price £8.99. Pp 156
ISBN 9781444181869

I am a firm believer that young people entering the various branches of health care should have, or obtain, a general idea of how this subject, in all its numerous subdivisions, has evolved. It makes them realize that it has taken many centuries, and the labour of vast numbers of dedicated people, for our present state of knowledge of medicine to develop and for them to realize that their children will probably be just as amazed as they are at our current areas of ignorance and misconceptions.

The general introduction to this series of 'All That Matters' books states: '(they) are written by the world's leading experts to introduce the most exciting and relevant areas of an important topic to students and general readers.' Dr Tim Hall is to be complimented on achieving the seemingly impossible task of condensing into a pocket-sized book of just over 150 pages an easy to read account of the whole field of medical practice from its earliest days into the conjectural future. His history of medicine is easy to read and is complimented by the sketches of that well

known artist, Sir Quentin Blake. It can certainly be recommended to trainees in health care.

Harold Ellis, Guy's, King's and St Thomas' School of Biomedical Sciences, London

Psychological Aspects of Cancer

Edited by Brian I Carr, Jennifer Steel
Springer 2013
Price £135. Pp 419
ISBN 978 1 4614 4865 5

The editors call the book a series of 'essays'. These follow a course loosely from speculation on psychobiological dimensions of cancer through to psychological treatment and advanced cancer.

Two contributions stand out for me. Michael Stefanek points out that science rarely advances simply by steady accretion of knowledge; given diverse scientific perspectives and research methods, controversy informed by healthy scepticism should underpin psychooncology. He illustrates this position by challenging consensus views including the value of screening for emotional distress and the efficacy of psychological interventions.

Susan Folkman eloquently describes the nature and function of hope in cancer from the perspective of stress and coping theory. She empathically evokes the patient predicament, and powerfully describes the

inherent contradictions in hope – planning for the worst while focusing on the positive.

Remaining chapters provide a mostly flat backdrop that throws Stefanek's and Folkman's contributions into sharp relief. The writing and editing is not all good; occasional sections were ungrammatical and unclear. Authors mostly try to convince the reader by uncritically accumulating citations rather than by synthesizing literature.

Chapters do little to articulate patients' experience, preferring generalized statements about 'stress' or 'distress'. They offer little for practitioners who think that psychooncology needs richer conceptual tools to engage with patients' experience. Ethical perspectives are absent. Therefore the decision about whether it is right to, for example, involve patients in decision-making, address spirituality or, as one chapter suggests, use an hallucinogen to treat existential anxiety, reduces to a matter of outcomes: do randomized controlled trials show that it reduces distress or improves quality of life? At the interface of morality and psychology, psychooncology will need more nuanced approaches to what are the right and wrong things to do.

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