

Textbook of Psoriasis

Edited by Peter van de Kerkhof
Blackwell Science 1999
Price £59.50. Pp 292
ISBN 0 632 05166 3

The recognition and subsequent management of skin disease is a vanishing component of most undergraduate medical curriculae in the UK. Maybe this is a sign of a decline in emphasis on clinical skills and an over-reliance on technology. Dermatology is one of the few, possibly the last, remaining specialties in which diagnosis is primarily clinical, with some pathological correlation. Whichever hospital clinical specialty one works in skin disease will intrude at some time or another — even in radiology where magnetic resonance scanning is being used for depth identification of cutaneous tumours.

Psoriasis, by its commonplace nature (2% of the UK population), is known to most if not all doctors, thus a little knowledge of its fascinating aetiopathogenesis and treatment strategies is pertinent to all of us. Peter van de Kerkhof has gathered together a distinguished team of experts in the field of psoriasis and as a consequence has produced a concise, informative and thorough textbook about this disease. The book is current, bearing in mind the rapidity of change in this field, especially in molecular genetics and immunomodulatory approaches to therapy. I was particularly impressed by the prominence given to the psychosocial aspect of this disease — an aspect which is a key to our understanding of the immense morbidity suffered by such patients. I was also gratified by the key importance that this textbook attached to the understanding that psoriasis is T-cell mediated and probably autoimmune in nature.

I have few, if any, criticisms of the book, although I would have liked to have seen a greater use of colour illustration, particularly for a textbook of dermatology, and also more summary tables for each chapter. These criticisms aside, this is an easily accessible and completely readable textbook on the current state of the art in psoriasis research and management. Although undoubtedly aimed at dermatologists and those

with an interest in dermatology I still believe that any departmental library would benefit from the presence of this book.

Christopher EM Griffiths, University of Manchester

Vignettes for the MRCOG 1

Edited by Roy G Farquharson
Quay Books 1997
Price £19.99. Pp 172
ISBN 1 85642 056 6

Vignettes for the MRCOG 2

Edited by Roy G Farquharson
Quay Books 1999
Price £18.99. Pp 112
ISBN 1 85642 166 X

As the title of these books suggest, they present a collection of short descriptive essays that should make essential reading for every specialist registrar sitting the MRCOG examination. The style of the text is even more appropriate with the recent change in the MRCOG examination to ten short essays.

Each chapter has been written by an expert in the field, and although this is useful to the reader, individual style and layout can be a negative feature.

Although each chapter is intended to be read in isolation, with an examination in mind, volume 1, first published in 1998, has 13 chapters with obstetrical and gynaecological subjects in no given order. Volume 2, published in 1999, on the other hand, has 5 obstetric chapters followed by seven gynaecological issues. I feel this makes for easier reading.

The introduction at the beginning of each chapter should help the reader think of various ways a question could be worded in an examination and is therefore beneficial.

The key points at the end of each chapter are helpful in summarizing the main issues arising in each essay and will enable the reader to structure an essay type answer more easily.

The majority of references at the end of most chapters in volume 1 tend to be before 1993, whereas those in volume 2 are more recent. This is always a difficult area in publishing textbooks with

the rapid change in medical knowledge but I feel that these could be more contemporary. A must for all trainees in obstetrics and gynaecology.

Carl Jensen, Lewisham Hospital

A Dictionary of the History of Medicine

Anton Sebastian
Parthenon Publishing 1999
Price £58.00. Pp 781
ISBN 1 85070 021 4

The *raison d'être* for this book (so the author, a consultant physician at the Victoria Infirmary in Glasgow, writes in the preface) is 'the need for a single book (giving) specific information on any topic in history of medicine, as the Oxford Dictionary is to the English language'. His projected readership is broad — from 'medical researchers, practitioners and clinicians' to 'laymen, paramedics, medical students and anyone else concerned in any way with health care'. The 2-page preface contains what is in effect a synopsis of the whole of medical history. Where does the separation between a dictionary of the history of medicine and a dictionary of medicine in the broader sense lie? This remains unclear. A few illustrations, mainly of pioneering individuals, are included; there could have been many more!

The book contains some 10 000 entries (definitions) on all aspects of medical history, and it is the author's hope that further editions will contain more. I have no major quibbles with the selection of entries or indeed with their overall accuracy, although dates are not always entirely correct (e.g. some of those falling in the 'tropical medicine' bracket. But is the book really necessary; the leading medical dictionaries (of which there are several) after all contain a good deal on historical aspects of medicine and related topics (anatomy, physiology and pharmacology included).

I am pleased to have a complimentary copy but I am not at all sure I would spend £60.00 on one. Having said that, the book has been beautifully produced and all credit should be given to the publisher for that.

GC Cook, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London

Cardiac Electrophysiology: From Cell to Bedside (3rd edn)

Douglas P Zipes, José Jalife
WB Saunders 1999
Price £159.00. Pp 1110
ISBN 0 7216 7811 4

Electrophysiology is one of the most rapidly advancing subspecialties in cardiology. This is why this well known book is already in its 3rd edition and has undergone considerable modifications from previous versions.

The editors, who are highly respected, have chosen key authors in their respective fields and have attempted to provide information on research ranging from recent advances in genetic and cellular mechanisms for arrhythmia to results of clinical ablation procedures. Notable inclusions in this latest edition have been a comprehensive section on gap junctions,

updates on the results of clinical trials and several chapters on advances in mapping techniques. These chapters sit well alongside chapters covering conventional clinical electrophysiology by noted authors such as Stevens, de Bakker and El-Sherif.

Of note are the impressive colour illustrations of maps of a variety of arrhythmias using optical, non-fluoroscopic and non-contact techniques. Unfortunately these are in a separate section at the front of the book which is a little inconvenient for the reader. One slight limitation is the chapter on atrial fibrillation ablation, which is advancing so quickly that this chapter is already somewhat out of date. Overall this is an excellent text with comprehensive coverage of electrophysiology written by noted authors in their field. It would prove very useful as a reference, but is far too detailed for a learning electrophysiologist.

Richard Schilling, St Mary's Hospital, London

