

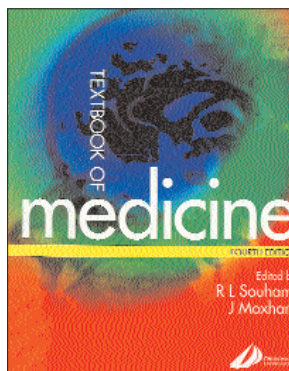
## Textbook of Medicine (4th edn)

Edited by RL Souhami, J Moxham  
Churchill Livingstone 2002  
Price £46.99. Pp 1508  
ISBN 0443064644

Of the current group of textbooks of medicine published in the UK, this was not one I was previously familiar with, since it came into being after I had done my membership.

My first reaction was who is this aimed at? The editors' answer was 'students of medicine', which probably means all of us. However, it is not. I did not think that there was enough detail in most sections to act as a reference source for a consultant, and it does not come with references, only 'Further reading'. It is above a level for most undergraduates and would probably be useful for those doing the membership. A current senior trainee confirmed use of a previous edition and its value for the MRCP examination. We agreed it was probably a text for 'dipping into' rather than for reading from cover to cover.

Throughout, case histories are included and more are available on a website, as well as additional photographic illustra-



tions. This is definitely not for me – I cannot envisage myself sitting down with this book and watching a computer monitor at the same time.

I was surprised by the variety of contents and authors – some were first-class world-beaters and others raised eyebrows. Although there is poor correlation between these initial thoughts and chapter contents, there is great variation throughout, in particular the detail in different sections. For instance, the approach to cancer treatment is generalized and lacks specifics whereas the infectious diseases section mentions Bartonellosis and Babesiosis, of which I knew

little, but was almost as long as the whole section on meningitis under neurology. This variation in standard becomes annoying, especially when porphyria appears to have become added on after 'disorders of lipid metabolism', and the mineral metabolism section concentrates largely on calcium and phosphate.

This is likely to be a good source of revision material for medical postgraduates, and it is affordable for most bookshelves. The next edition could be improved upon, however.

*RV Heatley, St James's University Hospital, Leeds*

## Essential Surgical Practice: Higher Surgical Training in General Surgery (4th edn)

Edited by A Cuschieri, RJC Steele, AR Moosa  
Arnold 2002  
Price £125.00. Pp 1393  
ISBN 0 340 806389

This is a companion volume to the editors' 'Generality of Surgical Practice'. This edition is a complete re-write and has another editor in Robert Steele. The book has 65 modules (now preferred to chapters) and the content is impressive. There is a fine mixture of basic science, explanations of basic investigations and detail of individual clinical conditions; any trainee with this knowledge base is not going to be caught out. Pitched at senior trainees and residents it will be more than adequate to prepare for the highest of surgical examinations, but I doubt whether it is a reference text for more senior surgeons.

What I cannot agree with about this book is the thinking behind its overall content. Aimed at general surgeons the first half deals with general surgical specialties, the next quarter is detailed

vascular surgery and the remainder incorporates neurosurgery, head and neck, urology, thoracic, transplantation, plastics and paediatric surgery. It is trying to be all inclusive, presumably with a bias towards vascular trainees. It would have been preferable to limit the vascular section, even though it is excellent, to the level of emphasis attributed to the other 'general surgical' specialties, or drop the last quarter and expand the colorectal section. Nevertheless, this is a good rewrite and I am sure it will continue to sell well.

*Paul Thomas, Whipps Cross University Hospital, London*

## Retiring from Medicine: Do You Have What it Takes?

Edited by Harvey White  
Royal Society of Medicine 2002  
Price £12.95. Pp 136  
ISBN 1853155020

Retirement is a fashionable topic: more people are doing it, and are doing it earlier than ever. While books advising on choosing a medical career are numerous, advice on how to graciously disengage from a full professional

medical life is hard to find. This book, in a light-hearted fashion but with a serious undertone, offers such advice.

The editor has collected 22 contributors, mainly but not exclusively medical, to write 20 chapters. As would be expected, not all chapters will be of value to everyone. It should not be read from start to finish, but chapters selected to suit a particular mood or special interest. A wide range of subjects is covered reflecting the variety of interests and remarkable talents of doctors.

Professional and emotional preparation for retirement, in my view, will define success or failure of the whole process. Although some authors touch on this, preparation probably deserves greater emphasis than this otherwise informative book gives it.

This is an enjoyable book, full of wisdom and humour. Should it be on the bookshelf of every department? Probably not, if only because its optimistic approach may encourage senior colleagues to leave early. However, as a retirement gift it would be perfect.

*Iain Dunnett, Southmead Hospital, Bristol (retired 2001)*