

## Davidson's Principles and Practice of Medicine (19th edn)

Edited by C Haslett, ER Chilvers, NA Boon, NR Colledge, JAA Hunter

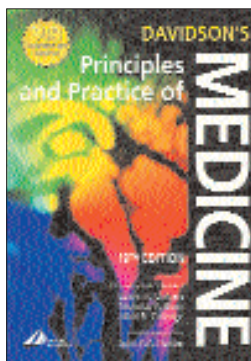
Churchill Livingstone 2002

Price £34.99. Pp 1274

ISBN 0 443 07035 0

Davidson's is a comprehensive text on clinical medicine that has been around for years, but has been revamped for its 50th anniversary. There is information contained within for everyone from medical students to consultants. The multicoloured structuring and organization of the information makes it simple to find the relevant facts, be they major manifestations of a disease or management of a specific pathological process.

There are two parts to the book – the first covers the principles of medical practice, the second the systems and their diseases. The first part encompasses all specialities and takes a physiological perspective – chapters include infection and immune system, critical care, and water, electrolyte and acid-base imbalance. These are well set out and sufficiently in-depth, and each chapter is separated into clearly defined sections.



In the second part each chapter begins with a tutorial on clinical examination, anatomy and physiology; an in-depth guide to disease manifestation for that specific system follows this. This is problem-orientated and cross-referenced, and aims to de-mystify the approach to the symptomatic patient. Following this the individual diseases for each system are covered in great detail.

Within the text are many diagrams and boxes, with a symbols scheme for easy and quick recognition of their content (for example a stethoscope indicates a list of clinical features or complications). The most innovative of these is the evidence-based medicine box, which provides the reader with a clinical bottom line relating to the topic at hand. These are not only referenced but also have an Internet address for further information.

On the negative side there is some repetition between the two parts, and as an accident and emergency doctor I could not find some information relating to the emergency setting. These are minor points, so providing you can handle the colour scheme, this textbook should be first choice for clinical medicine.

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## Modernising Cancer Services

Edited by Mark Baker

Radcliffe Medical Press 2002

Price £27.50. Pp 217

ISBN 185775459X

This short book contains contributions from many key players involved in improving cancer care, and is a useful background review of the difficult issues involved. There are excellent reviews on the epidemiology and the genetics of cancer, a discussion on screening, in particular the logistical difficulties involved, the potential benefits and more importantly the potential problems that can be caused, and a discussion on prevention, which would, if followed properly, make the biggest impact on cancer survival of all.

The main thrust of the book looks at the implementation of the Calman-Hine report, providing a timely review of the perceptive nature of the suggestions at a time when these went against the philosophy of the NHS. It looks at how the hub and spoke pattern provided a good basis for the development of the Cancer Plan and the subsequent establishing of the 34 Cancer Networks throughout

England. The reviews show how the Cancer Plan extended Calman-Hine from service development to prevention with suggestions on specificity and resource allocation. They emphasize the importance of primary care and the development of a palliative care structure with a balanced input from both NHS and the voluntary sector.

National standards are described which were a basis for peer review, and were developed using the manual of cancer services standards. This allows the development of the service using the improving outcomes in the malignancies where they had been seen. Several chapters stress the importance of the networks in developing the services, and the difficulties in bringing together providers who may have differing aims and aspirations. The importance of the Cancer Services Collaboration and the National Cancer Research Network are also emphasized.

It is clear, however, that the goals cannot be achieved without funding, motivation and sufficient workforce to carry out the plans. There is the promise of £570 million over 3 years,

although there is some doubt as to whether all of this will feed into cancer services. Doubt also exists about whether plans for developing the workforce can be achieved in the time laid out. There are descriptions of the pitfalls in commissioning cancer services, in particular the addition of primary care trusts which may delay the introduction of evidence-based authoritative national guidelines. The very nature of the book provides a fair bit of duplication which could have been minimized through the editorial process but it does lay down the aspirations, progress and pitfalls of an important goal.

Should any doubt this aim or question the details they have only to read the section from the patient, Mitzi Blennerhassett, to appreciate the woe-ful standard that some provide and that a number of patients are subjected to. There have been changes and improvements over the last year or two which are not necessarily reflected here, but I can certainly recommend the book as good background reading.

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