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Book Reviews

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- ESSENTIALS OF DERMATOLOGY J.L. Burton, Churchill Livingstone. 1980. pp. 196. £3.95
- ESSENTIAL PAEDIATRICS Hull, D. & Johnston, D.I. Churchill Livingstone, 1981 pp.305. £10.00
- PRACTICAL PROCEDURES IN CLINICAL MEDICINE Michael J. Ford and John F. Munro Churchill Livingstone 1980 pp. 128. £4.25
- LECTURE NOTES ON CLINICAL ONCOLOGY: Hancock, B.W. & Bradshaw, J.D.Blackwell, 1981.pp. 176. £5.50
- INTRODUCING ANATOMY J.D. Lever London: William Heinemann Medical Books Ltd. 1980.pp. 288. £7.95

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BOOK REVIEWS

PRACTICAL STUDENT OBSTETRICS

Bende, S & Tindall, VR

Heinemann, 1980

pp; 435. £12.50

When the Editor of this journal gave me this book to meditate over an apology was contained on a slip of paper inside the front cover: "Sorry Chris, longer than I thought; please let me know if you can't find time". Twenty-four chapters and 419 pages later I am afraid I cannot but agree that for a book that sets out to provide a "concise and practical" text it is rather long. Quite why this book has been produced in a size that is a little too large for the pocket and a little too small for the desk is a puzzle to me.

Although the individual chapters are easy to read and full of useful information, it was my feeling that the title was not fitted as well as it might have been to the contents.

The illustrations are clear, profuse and the majority relevant to the text on the same or facing page — a point of design many books fall short on. However, some of the reproductions of ultrasound scan suffer from insufficient labelling, insufficient for an undergraduate such as myself at any rate.

The use of trade names for drugs is a controversial subject in medical circles. Of course, trade names cannot be avoided completely but the use of names such as Welldorm and Mogadon (p.193) in the text without reference to their respective non-proprietary names is surely not a wise principle to suggest to the undergraduate.

A new reflex I think I may describe is elicited by showing fellow students this book and then telling them the price — various patterns of language result but commonest of these is, after a momentary jaw-drop, "who on earth is going to buy it at that price". The book itself is packed with information but sadly at a cost of nearly a pound an ounce I think has priced itself above the "Student" of its title.

C. Ingamells

ESSENTIALS OF DERMATOLOGY

J.L. Burton,

Churchill Livingstone. 1980.

pp. 196. £3.95

Should Dr. Burton suddenly decide that Dermatology is no longer his *raison d'être*, I would have no hesitation in recommending he apply to "Punch" for a job. Dr. Burton has a witty turn of phrase that lifts a standard textbook from the mundane and functional into the eminently

readable and, dare I say, enjoyable bracket. To suggest that "the forthright promulgation of unacceptable political views in totalitarian states" is a predisposing factor for the shedding of finger nails shows not so much an understanding of world politics as a true understanding and sympathy for the unfortunate medical student struggling through dry and often very tedious textbooks. "Essentials" is anything but that.

While the book does have its brighter side, the subject matter is presented in a logical, easy to follow and understandable way. After an introduction to the principles of diagnosis, chapters cover disorders of the main processes or building blocks of dermatology (keratinization, sweat glands, etc.). Infections and tumours are thoroughly emphasised as is the damage inflicted by radiation, ultra-violet light and the various little beasties who make their home on the stuff that keeps our innards from falling out. All the common diseases of the skin are covered very well as are a number of the less common ones. At the end of each chapter is a list of references for further reading and the whole thing is neatly brought together in a fine index, often the neglected part of a pocket textbook.

For me the chapter "The Skin and the Soma" on the dermatological manifestations of systemic diseases was the most fascinating and would be well worth extending, bringing as it does the art of observation back to medicine.

The only drawback of this book is unfortunately a major one. In the interests of economy there are no photographs, colour or black and white. A series of fine line drawings are included and the descriptions are good, but the reliance placed on using the eyes makes it essential that this book is used in conjunction with an atlas and plenty of practical experience for maximum benefit.

That aside, I could not fail to recommend this book to anyone who wants a pocket-sized book on dermatology or to anyone who wants to read a medical textbook which blows a refreshing wind across the barren dry stuffiness that seems the disturbing norm in all too many medical textbooks.

E. Crawford

ESSENTIAL PAEDIATRICS

Hull, D. & Johnston, D.I.

Churchill Livingstone, 1981

pp.305. £10.00

When looking at the bookshelves of my local shop

for an undergraduate textbook of paediatrics the choice lay between a large textbook (Hutchison's Paediatric Problems) and a note-form book (Lecture Notes in Paediatrics), there appearing to be a large gap between the two. It is into this gap that "Essential Paediatrics" falls both in size and in price.

On scanning through the book I was initially impressed by the shortness of the chapters, conducive to easy study in one sitting, and the clarity of the accompanying illustrations which complemented the text and succinctly reinforced the important points.

Further perusal at a more leisurely pace and as a constant pocket companion on the ward — for the book can fit inside a standard white coat pocket — showed the thoroughness of the authors as every disease encountered on the ward was mentioned in the book.

My criticisms of the book are minor. Firstly the index, although good, is not complete, and there is a lack of cross-references: one has to make associations oneself before looking the book up. My second criticism concerns the drawings which, although good, can hardly be described as "colour" when the only colour used is the occasional brown hatching.

In conclusion, I would recommend this book to any undergraduate who requires a basic yet comprehensive account of paediatric practice. The only problem I encountered trying to use the book for study was to find out which member of staff, from consultant to house officer, had borrowed it.

It is well worth the cover price.

Colin Holburn

PRACTICAL PROCEDURES IN CLINICAL MEDICINE

Michael J. Ford and John F. Munro
Churchill Livingstone 1980
pp. 128. £4.25

As medical science becomes more sophisticated and complex, so hospital doctors are called upon to carry out a diverse and ever broadening range of investigative procedures, many of which are potentially hazardous to the patient, unless carried out with care and precision. As one such doctor, I welcomed the opportunity to read this book, which gives guidance on 31 such procedures and contains notes not only on their execution but on indications, contra-indications and potential untoward effects. It covers procedures ranging from venepuncture to pericardial aspiration. It is written in concise terms and the drawings admirably complement the text. Whilst I was most interested to read all the chapters, I would consider that a few of the techniques described are not, and perhaps ought to be, within the repertoire of the senior medical students, house officers, and

medical registrars for whose assistance this book has been designed. The procedures I have in mind are transvenous endocardial pacing, breast biopsy and renal biopsy. In my very short experience (most of it in a major teaching hospital) these procedures would be carried out only by those with the appropriate specialist training but perhaps more may be expected of generalists in other, less well staffed, hospitals. It could be argued that if the aforementioned specialist techniques are included in this book then others such as upper gastrointestinal endoscopy deserve mention. I am sure that its clarity and brevity will make this book a most popular choice amongst medical students and junior hospital doctors alike.

M.D. MacLeod

LECTURE NOTES ON CLINICAL ONCOLOGY:

Hancock, B.W. & Bradshaw, J.D.

Blackwell, 1981.

pp. 176. £5.50

In the present era of medicine, the speciality of clinical oncology has been born and is growing rapidly, establishing itself in an ever-increasing number of medical centres. At the same time, the diagnosis and treatment of cancer is still an important part of the work in most medical and surgical units, and general practitioners are all involved in cancer management at some stage. Therefore it was perhaps predictable that Blackwells would publish this further addition to their Lecture Notes Series sooner or later.

Hancock and Bradshaw have followed the traditions of the Lecture Notes Series by writing a comprehensive yet compact and easily read book. In order to achieve this they have made use of a variety of tables, graphs and diagrams which, in general, are useful *aide-memoires* for the student. Occasionally, however, the reader finds himself skipping from page to page as he tries to navigate his way through a particularly high density of illustrations. Nevertheless, each chapter is well organised, being subdivided by subject and paragraph headings which recur throughout the book, following a common pattern.

The initial five chapters give an overview of cancer, its investigation and staging, and the various forms of treatment. This provides an excellent introduction to and summary of the general principles of clinical oncology. The last two chapters discuss some of the wider aspects of management, and to what extent education, screening and prevention can play a part: again, well worth reading. The remainder of the book gathers together and updates information, which can be obtained in most large medical textbooks, into a concise account of presentations, diagnoses, managements and prognoses of the various malignancies which affect man. This section of the

book is bound to appeal to students and housemen alike, who are continually seeking small textbooks with the relevant information in as brief a form as possible. Hancock and Bradshaw state in the preface that their book is " aimed at senior undergraduate students and recently qualified practitioners in all specialities: it is intended as an up-to-date guide to the theory and practice of all aspects of clinical oncology." By and large, they have succeeded in these aims.

G. Boyd

INTRODUCING ANATOMY

J.D. Lever

London: William Heinemann Medical Books Ltd. 1980.

pp. 288. £7.95

This book is intended primarily for premedical and pre-dental students and preclinical students commencing their study of anatomy, in the belief that, by giving the student a simple perspective of human biology, he or she will have a greater return from the time available for studying anatomy.

The layout of the book is good overall. However, the chapter on epithelia and glands would, I feel, benefit from an earlier place in the book than the last chapter, and the respiratory and alimentary systems receive specific mention only in the introductory chapter.

The first chapter provides a sound introduction to the basic tissues and systems of the body but is greatly weakened by a lack of illustrations. There is a paucity of illustrations throughout the book: there are no colour illustrations, no radiographs, no photomicrographs and other deficiencies such as no illustrations of the upper respiratory tract. Many of the diagrams which the book does contain are poor and badly coordinated with the text. Since one of the anatomy student's main problems is fitting the detail learnt into an overall visualisation and it is disappointing that the book gives little help in this struggle. The best illustrations in the book (taken from "Surgical Anatomy" by Joseph Maclaise in 1851) are inexplicably hidden away in the chapter on the cardiovascular system, although they would complement the last chapter well.

Useful chapters on the animal cell and connective tissues are rightly placed early in the book. The later chapters, covering skeleton, muscle, nervous and cardiovascular systems, should also prove helpful to many students, but here more difficulty is encountered in describing general principles without the benefit of detailed knowledge. However, this book only seeks to introduce and it is up to the individual student to piece together the whole story, with the benefit of further study of anatomy and other subjects.

The book contains much useful information, albeit with some inaccuracies, but the text is not well written and there is a lack of organisation including a deficient index. It would be much improved by a careful revision and by more attention to simple regional anatomy in the later chapters.

Although, perhaps, it is a rather long introduction to anatomy it is well worth a read at the beginning of the course, but by the end of the pre-clinical course most students would find it of little value in revision as the information this book contains is found woven into the texts of the standard books. It is worth a scan during early visits to the medical library but, at the price, it is a companion volume which I feel does not merit a place on the average student's bookshelf.

J.S. Frater

