

RES MEDICA

Journal of the Royal Medical Society



Book Review: Davidson's Principles and Practice of Medicine, 19th edition

Marion A Simpson

University of Edinburgh College of Medicine

Abstract

The first edition of Davidson's appeared in 1952; an almost pocket-sized volume which promised to concentrate on common disorders and everyday problems illustrated by an account of the applied anatomy and physiology of the relevant system. The textbook has come a long way since then, but remains true to its original ideals.

Copyright Royal Medical Society. All rights reserved. The copyright is retained by the author and the Royal Medical Society, except where explicitly otherwise stated. Scans have been produced by the Digital Imaging Unit at Edinburgh University Library. Res Medica is supported by the University of Edinburgh's Journal Hosting Service url: <http://journals.ed.ac.uk>

ISSN: 2051-7580 (Online) ISSN: ISSN 0482-3206 (Print)

Res Medica is published by the Royal Medical Society, 5/5 Bristo Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9AL

Res Medica, Summer 2003 : 28

doi:[10.2218/resmedica.v0i0.1011](https://doi.org/10.2218/resmedica.v0i0.1011)

Book Review

Davidson's Principles and Practice of Medicine, 19th edition

Marion A Simpson

4th year medical student, University of Edinburgh College of Medicine

M.A.Simpson@sms.ed.ac.uk

The first edition of *Davidson's* appeared in 1952; an almost pocket-sized volume which promised to concentrate on common disorders and everyday problems illustrated by an account of the applied anatomy and physiology of the relevant system. The textbook has come a long way since then, but remains true to its original ideals.

As a fourth year student at Edinburgh University, the *alma mater* of Sir Stanley Davidson, I can claim to be on intimate terms with the previous edition of the textbook, and I must confess to having been sceptical about the merits of a re-write. My doubts were quashed, however, when I began to investigate the new volume. Beneath its chic black cover, the book has undergone a radical structural reorganisation: it now comprises two discrete sections, *Principles of Medical Practice* and *System-Based Diseases*. The first does just what it promises, dealing with general principles such as infection and immune failure, critical care, and frail older people; topics which weave an overarching thread through every medical specialty but which are seldom addressed in isolation. The second discusses the clinical features and management of diseases under headings such as *Cardiovascular Disease* or *Blood Disorders*, fully in keeping with the system-based approach adopted by most 21st century medical schools. The structure of each chapter is broadly similar; there is a brief revision of the functional anatomy and physiology of each system, the investigations which might usefully be employed, and a large section on the major clinical manifestations of disease of the system, before moving on to details of specific diseases. The emphasis on symptomatology as a starting-point resonates with the fashionable problem-based approach to clinical medicine.

One of the most praiseworthy new features of this edition is the double-page spread on clinical examination preceding each of these system-based chapters. Illustrated with a human figure and a flow diagram of a scheme for examination, these provide a summary of the salient clinical features of disease of each system; very helpful for developing a logical examination sequence and invaluable for OSCE revision.

Changes in layout are not the only new aspects of the 19th edition. Several sections have appeared *de novo*, including a chapter dedicated to *Diabetes Mellitus* and one on *Clinical Genetics*. The opening chapter on *Infection and Immune Failure* has also been rewritten and expanded, with a large section on tropical and international health reflecting the enormous popularity of the textbook with students and doctors as far afield as India and South Africa. The book clearly demonstrates a willingness to move with the times; the chapter on *Drug Therapy* features a section dealing clearly and succinctly with some important aspects of evidence-based medicine, and throughout the book there are recent journal references and useful web addresses.

Having used Davidson's myself I may be liable to take for granted its many strengths; it would be remiss of me not to mention the clear and logical layout, pithy and relevant information (with plenty of information boxes to highlight the most salient points), well-chosen photographs and beautiful illustrations. These were features of the previous edition too; now they have been developed further, creating an even more polished and accessible volume.