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Book Reviews

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Abstract

Review of Medical Physiology, Twenty-first Ed. ,William F. Ganong and
Robbins & Cotran Pathologic Basis of Disease - Seventh Ed., V.Kumar. N . Fausto, A . Abbas

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Book Reviews

This edition four major texts commonly used in Edinburgh are reviewed by *CHRISTY LAMONT*, our advertising editor, *CATHERINE WEBB*, the Editor, and *EDWARD DUNN*, a RMS council member. Here, WF Ganong's Review of Medical Physiology and Robbins and Cotran Pathologic Basis of Disease are reviewed



Review of Medical Physiology -
Twenty-first Ed.

William F. Ganong
Paperback, 784 pages
Appleton and Lange 2003
ISBN 0071402367
RRP £29.99

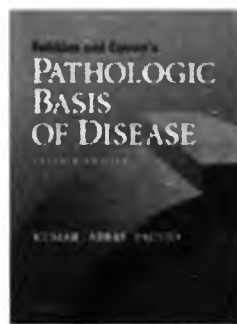
In short this book is "The Joy of Sex" of Physiology. Whatever one wants to know about physiology, and whatever someone does not want to know about physiology can be found within the pages of this brilliant tome.

Many a lecturer will stand up in front of their audience and rave about the merits of one huge textbook or another. Thankfully most people are sleeping at the time and therefore save themselves from bad shopping advice. However, some do not. Please, please do not listen to any lecturer when they advise you to buy a physiology textbook unless it is Prof William F Ganong's book. You will not need an endocrinology book, it's covered, you will not need a renal book, it's covered, and you definitely will not need a cardiovascular book, once again it's covered. In a nutshell, this book is all you need to cover the physiology behind medicine. To be honest, if you're not a medic reading this, but a hard working biomedical student, I can say from both personal experience and many, many recommendations, this book will also be more than adequate for you.

Many a medical student has found this to be true. Often medical students in that time of despair and worry more commonly known as revision time, are frantically looking for a book that will tell them what they want to know without any fuss. They also want an information source that is up to date. Most textbooks fall down here. The large physiology texts are not often updated, perhaps once or twice a decade. *Review of Medical Physiology* is different. It is updated every two years by just one man, Prof Ganong himself. It is a testament to him that his book has lasted so long, from the first edition in the swinging sixties to the latest edition in the modern 21st century. Just look up "Ghrelin" – it's there.

The book itself has a refreshingly simple layout. No blinding by snazzy presentation, covering lack of information with pretty pictures. Refreshingly, the publishers have bucked the trend of most, and not insisted on full colour, which unless well done tends to distract rather than aid the reader. The book does not require full colour, all the diagrams are clear enough to more than stand up one their own with just black, white and the red of the general scheme. Chapters progress through the normal physiology on to clinical conditions, with all keywords highlighted when either first mentioned or defined. This makes the use of one of the best features of the book even easier. The index at the back of the book is one of the best seen for a physiology textbook. Absolutely anything you would want to look up will be found, although you may have to know the American spelling of the word.

At the back of the book, a section is dedicated to multiple choice questions based on every chapter of the book. The questions take the general form of true and false statements, which seems to also be the basis of the dreaded Edinburgh MCQs of "the least false false sentence" notoriety. These questions are of invaluable use when revising, and fully test one's knowledge of the topic. Further more, the book also carries a list of the normal values of various body substances as well as a list of the most commonly used abbreviations. ED



Robbins & Cotran Pathologic
Basis of Disease - Seventh Ed.

V.Kumar, N.Fausto, A.Abbas
Hardcover, 1552 pages
W.B. Saunders Company 2001
ISBN 0721601871
RRP £56.99

Robbins & Cotran Pathologic Basis of Disease is one of the few weighty tomes that one can actually sit down and read. Once you get beyond that sickly green/ purple colour scheme of the cover, you find a well laid out book that covers the entire spectrum of disease in clear, concise detail. The chapters are broken down into sections that initially present the normal pathology, before delving into the pathophysiology of common diseases of the tissue. The sections are clearly headed and a separate index at the start of each chapter means finding them becomes a doddle.

The book makes a point of allowing a large amount of text to be easily accessible. It starts with the basics and slowly works up to the more complex. This allows you to follow the story with total understanding which makes the oft complex events described clear in one's head. Nearly every page will have histological images that to the untrained eye look just like a collection of colourful patterns. The figure legends, however, manage to make sense of the images which can help one make up for a lack of basic histological knowledge.

This book has an excellent additional feature in the form of a MCQ CD. This is of valuable use when preparing for your exams. PathCAL (see earlier article) may be fine for general learning of the areas but you do get to learn the right answer rather than understand the topic. This CD presents you with cases with associated histological images and asks you detailed questions about the pathology behind the disease. The book is just about worth buying for the CD alone. It really helps your revision of pathology and challenges you to think more deeply about the topic. ED

Christy Lamont adds... the online version has all the excellent features of its "real" counterpart – with excellent layout and progression through concepts. One of my problems with Robbins complete edition is that it is huge and very heavy. Not a book to be carted back and forward to the library, or even to be lifted on to your desk (if you can find room for it). The great advantage of the online version is the lack of bulk. It will pop up on your computer screen, complete with all text and pictures.

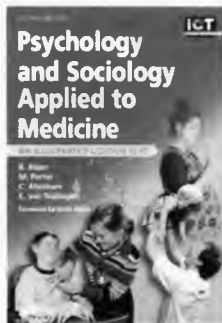
An added bonus of the online version is the "lightbox" function. This allows you to select diagrams from the text, which the program will then transfer into a printable version, along with space for annotation. One downside of the online version is the fact that the diagrams are often not beside the text which they summarise. There are links within the text to the diagram but these can take a while to load, even on a broadband connection.

One thing to be aware of when using this resource: the search engine often is not very efficient. It seems to have problems recognising words you have searched in the titles of chapters. For example "neoplasia" will only come up in separate references in the text – there is no clue in the search results that neoplasia has in fact a whole detailed chapter devoted to it. In this respect, I would advise mainly ignoring the search engine and going to the old-fashioned index and contents tabs instead.



Book Reviews

The book reviews continue with *CHRISTY LAMONT*'s review of the essential Health and Society text of which Dr Mike Porter of Edinburgh University is one of the authors. *CATHERINE WEBB* reviews the Clinical Skills text by Dr Philip Welsby, always an entertaining lecturer on tropical diseases and a past contributor to the journal



Psychology and Sociology Applied to Medicine - Second Ed.

Michael Porter, et al.
Paperback, 192 pages
Churchill Livingstone 2004
ISBN 0443072957
RRP £21.99

As all present medical students are aware, our education focuses on the "patient centred approach", empathy and communication much more than previous medical courses. We are taught to evaluate the psychosocial influences behind patient behaviour and hopefully become better doctors because of it. The material covered in our course (and by extension "Psychology and Sociology Applied to Medicine") often appears to be common sense. For example, a patient will feel uncomfortable in hospital because of their lack of autonomy. However, because we are being forced to think about these issues, relief from undue stress on patients can be considered. Thus, what is frequently seen by medical students as an extraneous part of our course is one of the most important.

Alder, Porter, Abraham and van Teijlingen's textbook is a succinct explanation of the most interesting and significant aspects of psychosocial behaviour related to medical practice.

Slightly longer than the previous edition, at 192 pages the book is divided up into nine chapters written by an impressive multitude of contributors including Consultant psychologists, public health lecturers, general practitioners, behavioural science experts and MacMillan nurses. These 34 contributors lead to a variety of styles of writing throughout the book. I found it easy to read but occasionally was presented with a daunting page of solid text – not particularly reader friendly. Each chapter comprises of between eight and fourteen topics each covered in a double page spread.

Throughout the text, we find useful diagrams and case studies to consider. These case studies are valuable in placing the information in context of patients and their experiences. Possibly the most convenient feature is the short summary bullet-points which are found on each page. These give concise "take home messages" from each topic.

Additions to the book include information on "quality of life", "media and health" and "social implications of the new genetics". These new aspects of the book are obviously drawn from current research and issues within psychology. With the increasing prevalence of genetic testing and the growing number of diseases which can be detected, doctors of the future will have to be well versed in the psychological implications of genetic testing. The double page spread available in this textbook is comprehensive and pertinent in modern medical practice – useful for both students and those more advanced in medicine.

This book is a must for those Edinburgh medical students who have left revision of health and society to the last minute. For students who have graduated past the pre-exam panic, the book is an excellent summary of all current research into psychosocial aspects of medicine. I would recommend it for gaining insight and empathy towards patients occasionally baffling behaviour. *CL*



Clinical History Taking & Examination - Second Ed.

Philip D. Welsby
Hardcover, 176 pages
Churchill Livingstone 2002
ISBN 0443070881
RRP £20.99

Behind a classic Churchill Livingstone exterior, Dr Philip Welsby's *Clinical History Taking and Examination* covers one of the broadest areas of medical teaching – the dreaded patient consultation! The first time a medical student is left in a room with a patient, albeit in the company of a colleague, it is difficult to say who suffers the most from the experience. The unwell and unsure patient, or the even more unsure student who is terrified of making the patient worse?

Dr Welsby hits on this point exactly by providing not only the medical information necessary to make a correct diagnosis, but also the skills needed to communicate with the most important people in medicine – the patients. From general principles to special topics, this book takes you through the major systems and back again leaving no stone unturned.

When evaluating this very worthy text, the mind is unavoidably drawn into a comparison with MacLeods' *Clinical Examination*¹, another well known Edinburgh book. Dr Welsby freely acknowledges this and with his usual excellent humour tells us that this book is where students should look first – MacLeods and the like can wait till later.

As I prepare for another Clinical Case Study, I too find myself agreeing with this summation. MacLeods is wonderful once you know the basics: what to ask; why to ask it; where to examine; what to look for. However, this book with its concise, logical layout and its useful yellow summary boxes provides consolidation to the clear explanations of what questions to ask and where to look for signs of disease. Each system is broken down into digestible chunks and served to you on a platter with side orders of helpful diagrams, images and pictures. These latter teaching aids are what most distinguish this text from MacLeods, especially for those of us with small amounts of imagination and even less clinical experience.

It is refreshing to be able to read and use a book that has the feel of being written by a human being. Far too many textbooks have any sense of personality surgically removed: making them some of the driest things one can attempt to read. This is a prime factor why so many people are daunted when told to look up facts and figures in a textbook. Dr Welsby has managed to inject (he is a physician after all) some of his humour into his book. This humour has become a trademark amongst students and was on good show in his contribution to the journal in the last edition².

Now no longer "Doctor Death" Dr Welsby shines a beacon of light to those finding their feet in the often confusing area of consultations and clinical practice. I recommend this book to anyone navigating their way through the world of medical learning and clinical history taking and examination. *CW*

¹ Munro FA, Campbell IW. *MacLeods Clinical Examination*. 19th Edition, Churchill Livingstone 2003, Edinburgh

² Welsby PD. Everything you would want to know about contracting a tropical disease. *Res Medica* 268(1) 2004: 21-22.