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Book Reviews

Abstract

- Title: Geriatrics (Guidelines in Medicine — Vo.1) Authors: A.N. Exton-Smith, P.W. Overstall. Publishers: MTP Press Limited. Pages 344. Publication Date: 1979
- Title: The M.R.C.G.P. Examination. Authors: A.J. Moulds, T.A. Bouchier Hayes & K.H.M. Young. Publishers: M.T.P. Press Limited, International Medical Publishers. Pages 131. publication Date: November 1978. Price: £4.95
- Title: Local Analgesia — 2nd edition. Author: Dr. Clive Jolly. Publishers: H.K. Lewis & Co. Ltd., London. Pages: 152 (illusr. — 19) Publication date: 1979. Price: £5.00 nett

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BOOK REVIEWS

Title: Geriatrics (Guidelines in Medicine – Vo.1)
Authors: A.N. Exton-Smith, P.W. Overstall.
Publishers: MTP Press Limited. Pages 344.
Publication Date: 1979

Geriatric medicine is becoming a more important discipline and occupies a greater proportion of the undergraduates' clinical experience. The student requires an accompanying textbook from which to fortify his clinical knowledge, but until recently the choice of reasonably priced texts has been poor and it is good to be able to welcome a newcomer to the field.

The book, in hardback, is written by two distinguished geriatricians and is well laid out in a structured manner. It commences with a chapter entitled "Theories of Ageing" and ends appropriately with a chapter entitled "Care of the Dying". This last chapter would have been enhanced by a small section relating to the legal disposal of the dead, a topic which is often bewildering to the newly qualified.

Between the aforementioned chapters the authors approach the subject in a systematic manner with chapters on special geriatric problems interspersed throughout. Subjects included are, nutrition, and rehabilitation. The rehabilitation chapter concentrating on strokes is welcome as the subject is an often neglected aspect of undergraduate teaching.

The chapter relating to the Principles of Drug Therapy has been relegated to the back of the book, a site I consider totally inappropriate for such an important subject. This chapter would

have been better following the chapter on "Special Features of Disease in Old Age" thus emphasising to the reader the need to be especially careful when prescribing for the elderly.

The social aspects of geriatric care have been scattered throughout the text making it difficult for the reader to assess what services are available for the elderly. The authors would probably have achieved a more comprehensive account had they entitled a chapter: Social Services for the Elderly.

Psychogeriatric welfare is reviewed briefly with the emphasis being correctly placed on the common geriatric problems, namely toxic confusional states and dementia.

I have a brief criticism to make relating to the layout of the index. Most subjects can be found under their own heading but unfortunately this is not so in the case of dermatological problems where the reader is required to wade through the "skin diseases" section to find the relevant topic. I would have thought Pressure Sores was an important enough subject to warrant a separate entry.

In summary, this is a welcome addition to the fold of geriatric medicine textbooks but requires to be fortified with information from other larger and smaller works.

I also wonder if the authors have found a new cure, or psychosomatic disorder:— "Radiography may provide great symptomatic relief for superior vena caval obstruction . . ." This may well be so in psychiatric practice but I very much doubt it in the case of bronchial carcinoma.

A.J. Grant

Title: The M.R.C.G.P. Examination.

Authors: A.J. Moulds, T.A. Bouchier Hayes & K.H.M. Young. **Publishers:** M.T.P. Press Limited, International Medical Publishers. **Pages** 131.

Publication Date: November 1978. **Price:** £4.95

With about 1000 candidates now presenting themselves annually for the M.R.C.G.P. examination it was only a matter of time before this hardback, or something like it, appeared in medical bookshops. It is subtitled "A comprehensive guide to preparation and passing" and the authors, who are the organisers of some of the most successful courses for the M.R.C.G.P. exam and all serving officers in Her Majesty's forces, should know what they are talking about.

In his foreword, the ubiquitous Dr. John Fry, explains that the failure rate – now approaching 40% – in the exam, is due, at least in part, to unfamiliarity with the special nature and form of the exam – with MCQ's (Multiple Choice Questions), MEQ (Modified Essay Question), TEQs (Traditional Essay Question) and oral tests.

The book has been written to prepare and familiarise candidates with these various parts of the examination. It does this admirably. It is not a textbook. Six short chapters deal with each section of the examination – what to expect and how best to prepare. Also included are a few vital statistics concerning General Practice in the National Health Service, a recommended reading list (books, periodicals, journals and papers) and an eight point work-plan for the candidate. All of these make up rather less than half of the book. The major part is a full length mock examination with answers at the back.

At the moment the majority of candidates presenting themselves for the examination are young doctors at the completion of their training or soon after becoming principals in general practice. The examination has therefore become increasingly oriented to an assessment suitable for these candidates. It is possible that the present form of the examination may change in the foreseeable future, but until it does, all candidates would be well advised to read this book. Whether or not each should be encouraged to spend a fiver to secure his own copy is doubtful. The book can be borrowed, read at leisure and returned after two or, at the most, three evenings and even then

leave the reader enough time to catch his favourite T.V. programme.

Anyway, if the book serves its purpose it shouldn't need to be read again.

J.S.K. Stevenson

Title: Local Analgesia – 2nd edition.

Author: Dr. Clive Jolly. **Publishers:** H.K. Lewis & Co. Ltd., London. **Pages:** 152 (illusr. – 19) **Publication date:** 1979. **Price:** £5.00 nett

The second edition of Dr. Jolly's small book on 'Local Analgesia' appears at an opportune time when there is a resurgence of interest in analgesic techniques for surgery as well as for pain relief in non-surgical conditions. As a primer, the book gives a useful outline of the principal techniques available, their indications and contraindications and a description of the various complications which may be anticipated. There is a useful chapter on points of technique to be observed in the performance of any kind of analgesic block and a reminder that analgesic techniques may be, but are not necessarily, safer than general anaesthesia.

The final chapter on 'Therapeutic Uses of Nerve Blocks' is, however, rather patchy and unbalanced. It is admittedly difficult to summarise briefly the whole field of the work of Pain Clinics but it would have been worthwhile extending this chapter to give a more comprehensive outline of the blocks used and the conditions for which they are indicated. The author has attempted to cover the subject by mentioning only a few techniques to illustrate how local analgesia is being used outwith the operating theatre.

This book is a helpful introduction for the junior anaesthetist to the subject of regional blocks. For those who wish to delve deeper into the subject, there is a select list of articles for 'Further Reading' in addition to a comprehensive list of references.

While the book can be recommended for the junior anaesthetist, it is a pity that there is so much evidence of slipshod proof reading in the form of misspelling, grammatical errors and omitted apostrophes.

A.H.B. Masson