Diseases physician and an epidemiologist and should be useful for undergraduate medical students and nurses.

My only criticism is that there appears to be a degree of imbalance in presentation, some infections being dealt with in detail while the description of others is rather brief.

The text is clearly written and easy to read and the recommendations for management of infections are practical. This book can be recommended.

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The Incomplete Houseman. A Guide for Medical Students and First-year Doctors, M.J. Atkins. Pp. 55. H.K. Lewis, London, 1983. £3.00.

This slim volume contains a collection of practical tips for medical students and housemen on how to communicate with patients and perform their tasks efficiently. It is written in a chatty style, serious suggestions on, for example, how to deal with angry patients, or a check-list of things to do for a pre-operative patient, being interspersed with jokey chapters concealing a simple message. The whole book can be read easily in about twenty minutes.

Dr Atkins was surely well-intentioned in writing the book, and I cannot quarrel with the majority of his advice, but I fear that much of what he says is not communicated best in book form. A houseman who arrives late for his new job without knowing where the wards are, who shouts at his patients, who loses the X-rays, and who puts blood samples in the wrong bottles is certainly performing poorly, but he is unlikely to improve by reading a book telling him not to do these things. Rather like learning to ride a bicycle, no amount of preparation can get round the need for practical experience, and a certain quantity of common sense is presumed. If difficulties are encountered, this should be apparent to a more experienced person who can best help by discussing them with the trainee.

Twenty minutes spent with one's predecessor in a job should provide as much information as this book, and would save three pounds.

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Contemporary Medical Physiology, Robert L. Vick. Pp. xxxii + 1003, illustrated. Addison-Wesley, Menlo Park, California, Reading, Massachusetts, London, Amsterdam, Don Mills, Ontario, Sydney, 1984. £35.55.

The appearance of a completely new textbook of physiology is a comparatively rare event but such a book enters a crowded and competitive field. This large (1,000 pages) and expensive (£35) book is multi-authored but, perhaps because all the authors come from Baylor Medical College in the US, the style and approach are consistent throughout.

According to the preface, this book was designed to provide 'health science students with an introduction to physiology'. In practice, because of its size and approach, this book will only be of interest to medical students but, for this group, the book has many features which will make it a serious alternative to many of the traditional texts. First, it is a very attractive book to look at. It is profusely illustrated with figures and many exceptionally fine micrographs. The layout of sections and chapters is logical and clear and the inclusion of summaries at the end of each chapter (called study outlines) all greatly assist in finding ones way around in this long book. A novel feature is the inclusion of many short case histories illustrating the clinical abnormalities which occur as a result of disorders of normal physiology.

A second feature of the book is that the weight given to various topics differs from many of the alternative texts. Thus the longest sections of the book are on the cardiovascular, respiratory and endocrine systems. There are also substantial sections on metabolism and nutrition: subjects often underrepresented because they lie between physiology and biochemistry in traditional curricula. The sections on cell physiology and neurophysiology are relatively short. In my view this weighting is well suited to the needs of future medical practitioners as it stresses those areas of physiology which lead most directly to understanding the causes and treatment of the common diseases.

A third feature of the book is the very substantial amounts of clinical physiology included in the presentation. Thus in addition to the case histories, there are many chapters and sections of chapters dealing with abnormal physiology. Most preclinical courses in the UK now have substantial amounts of applied and clinical physiology within them and there is a real need for a textbook which includes adequate coverage of both basic human physiology and clinical physiology. This book comes as close as any in fulfilling this need.

In summary this textbook successfully covers the whole range of preclinical physiology and makes a valiant attempt to display physiology both as a