Book Reviews

Diagnostic Picture Tests in Endocrinology, edited by D.C. Evered and R. Hall. Pp. 128, illustrations. Wolfe, London, 1991. Paperback, £7.95.

This is a lovely little book: cheap, attractive, fun to dip into and educational. A total of 215 illustrations (nearly all are colour photographs) have been taken from the *Wolfe Colour Atlas of Endocrinology* and presented with a short list of questions. The main value of the book is the breadth of the clinical conditions covered, which enables students to benefit at a glance from the experience which takes a lifetime for an expert to acquire.

The authors state in the preface that they have tried to deal largely with common endocrine problems, but fortunately they have failed. Doctors see common problems in everyday clinical practice, and the advantage of a compendium like this is the illustration of things they are never likely to see but about which they need to know.

One of the key points is the high quality of the photographs, but other aspects of layout are equally important. The bold numbering of the questions, combined with the quality of the binding, makes it eminently easy to flick to the back and look up the answers.

It is always possible to find fault, of course, and potential purchasers should not be detracted from what follows. Experts would quibble with some answers (e.g. that neurofibromatosis was not associated with medullary carcinoma of the thyroid), but the world would not be the same if they didn't. They would also note occasional mistakes (e.g. hyperglycaemia for hypercalcaemia in Question 2). They would also fret about the ECG that showed small complexes and U waves, in which hypothyroidism was given as a correct answer while Conn's syndrome was incorrect. Finally there are very occasional questions phrased in the 'not uncommonly seen in' format, but they are the exception rather than the rule.

This is a good little book. It is well worth buying.

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Clinical Epidemiology – a basic science for clinical medicine, 2nd Edition, D.L. Sackett, R.B. Haynes, G.H. Guyatt & P. Tugwell. Pp. xv + 441, 70 illustrations. Little, Brown and Company, London, Boston, Toronto, 1991. Paperback, £23.95.

As in the first edition, the authors deliberately eschew providing a formal definition of clinical epidemiology. It has something to do with the application of the principles of population epidemiology and biostatistics to the care of the individual patient.

The structure of the book reflects the three major aspects of clinical practice, namely diagnosis, management and keeping up to date. It applies epidemiological principles in a critical analysis of how to improve the accuracy and efficiency of diagnosis and prognosis making, how to select diagnostic tests and interpret diagnostic data, how to select the best therapy and aid patient compliance and how to assess response. The third section is concerned with self audit of performance, the best use of information sources, and continuing medical education. The major changes in this edition are in the chapters on diagnostic tests, the interpretation of confidence limits, understanding utilities and do it yourself N-of-1 trials. There is also a timely new chapter on how to assess reviews and meta analyses.

Putting science into the art of medicine – it entails a degree of numeracy and there *are* equations – might seem a dull business but not a bit of it. The authors' enthusiasm, nay passion, for their brief – this overflows into any number of footnotes – combined with an informal and lighthearted approach should inspire the reader who appreciates the potential here for improving his or her clinical performance. *Clinical Epidemiology* is wholeheartedly recommended and should be mandatory reading for those who teach medicine to imbue important principles at a stage where they will have the greatest long-term effects.

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Books Received

Accident and Emergency Diagnosis and Management, 2nd edition, Anthony F.T. Brown. Pp. xv + 408, not illustrated. Butterworth/Heinemann, Oxford, 1992. Paperback £16.95.

ABC of Vascular Diseases, edited by John H.N. Wolfe. Pp. 73, illustrated. BMJ, London, 1992.

Anaesthesia Review 9, edited by Leon Kaufman. Pp. 280, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Milan, New York, 1992. £23.95.

An Aid to the MRCP Viva, M.A. Mir, E.A. Freeman and R.E.J. Ryder. Pp. 331, not illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, New York, 1992. Paperback £14.95.

Aids to Clinical Examination, 2nd edition, P.C. Hayes. Pp. 152, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Milan, New York, 1992. £8.95.