dom critically examines the problems, discusses curriculum development strategies, looks at selection and assessment procedures, tackles the seemingly intractable problems of the pre-clinical year, and considers the likelihood of change.

The most central chapter in the well-written and highly readable book concerns the teaching of teachers. As Lowry says 'We can no longer assume that because someone can do the job they can teach the skill. We must train staff to teach as effectively as possible and should encourage them to see this as an important part of their job. . . . Teaching excellence should be rewarded, and there should be real penalties for individuals or units if they fail to fulfil their teaching obligations.' (p. 57).

This excellent little book should be read by all who are in any way concerned with teaching medical students, and not least by postgraduate teachers who often teach undergraduates in the clinical years and need to understand the problems students face, and should be more involved in the pre-clinical years to provide the clinical context for what is being taught there.

There is a sense in which medical education's time has come. Change is actively being encouraged. Medical educationalists should seize the opportunity, and Stella Lowry makes an important contribution to this crusade.

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Minimal Access – Medicine and Surgery, Principles and Techniques, edited by D. Rosin. Pp. xii + 279, illustrated. Radcliffe Medical Press, Oxford, 1993. Hardback, £39.50.

This book is the first in a series, the successive volumes of which will cover individual specialties. It has been produced with commendable rapidity: the review copy was received in June 1993 and the foreword and preface are dated March 1993. It is well-produced with many chapters extensively illustrated.

The first two chapters given a brief history of surgery and a description of the philosophy of patient-friendly surgery. There then follows a chapter dedicated to each area in which minimal access surgery is practised. These concentrate on technical detail with a brief description of a variety of techniques. However, there is insufficient detail in these descriptions for the reader to perform the technique on the basis of this description alone. Perhaps each chapter is designed to 'whet the appetite' for the subsequent volumes in the series.

In general each contribution is well referenced, although it is a pity in a field that is expanding as rapidly as this that there are so few references dated later than 1991 (and one marked 'in press' was published in 1992).

I am not clear to whom the editor has addressed this volume. It is based on the erroneous concept that the route of access can unify many disparate specialties. I doubt there would be a market for a volume of this size entitled 'Operative techniques in Medicine and Surgery' and covering such a wide range of specialties! Minimal

access surgery is a means of practising one's own specialty, and this book is unlikely to find many purchasers in the fields of orthopaedics, gynaecology and ENT, although each has its chapter. General surgery is well covered with separate chapters on upper abdominal surgery, vascular, thoracic and urological procedures, and there is a good review of upper GI endoscopy. Perhaps those preparing for examinations in surgery in general will find this book useful to review the wide range of techniques available.

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Essentials of Medicine, 3rd edition, edited by T.E. Andreoli, J.C. Bennett, C.C.J., Carpenter, F. Plum and L.H. Smith. Pp. xxviii + 921, illustrated. Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, New York, London, 1993. Paperback, £29.50.

Both the title and preface of this book describe succinctly what it aims to be, that is, a comprehensive but not exhaustive textbook. The latter function being fulfilled by its 'parent' the *Cecil Textbook of Medicine*. Cecil Essentials is also a multiauthor text from the USA and consequently reflects the practice in that country, which may differ in some, usually minor, respects from that in Britain and Europe. This does include, however, the irritation of measurements in the text not being in SI units, although conversions are given in the appendix.

The book is set out in a traditional way, system by system, usually with useful introductory chapters on basic anatomical and physiological principles and general patient assessment, before succeeding chapters on specific disorders. There is a comprehensive chapter on HIV infection and AIDS and a useful, albeit short, final chapter on ageing. Despite its multi-author composition, the text style is fairly consistent throughout and easy to read. There is particularly good use made of diagrams and summary tables. Inevitably, such a text will have omissions, because of recent developments, such as the absence of any discussion of the role of ACE inhibitors after myocardial infarction. However, I felt, in general, this book fulfilled its aim quite well. It can be recommended as a useful and readable text for medical students and junior doctors, especially those preparing for exams and also for more established physicians wishing a relatively succinct and contemporary overview especially of fields of which they are not regularly keeping abreast.

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Martindale: The Extra Pharmacopoeia, 30th edition, edited by J.E.F. Reynolds. Pp. xxv + 2363, illustrated. Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, The Pharmaceutical Press, London, 1993. Hardback, £160.00.