

Aids to Paediatrics, 3rd edition, A. Habel. Pp. 231, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, New York, Tokyo, 1993. Paperback £10.95.

Alex Habel says that his book 'has been written primarily for postgraduate students' and that 'in this format the wood can be seen for the trees'. He has revised his construction of a mass of lists, charts and tables, within which a variety of symptoms, signs and diseases are classified in terms of diagnoses, investigations or progressions, sometimes subdivided into common, uncommon and rare. It is an impossible book to 'read', but it is intended, one imagines, to be used either as an *aide memoire* for those anxious not to overlook a fact, or, more probably, to help one remember headings when revising for examinations.

As this is the third edition of this slim volume, one assumes that some young doctors must buy it. It is certainly cheap but I could find little else to commend it. The popularity of such idiosyncratic tomes, I believe, is a reflection of the inadequacy of the postgraduate teaching experienced by most trainees. Far better to invest in one of the Service-Based Learning modules, from the Centre for Medical Education at the British Postgraduate Medical Federation, and to acquire the library skills to glean gems of information from more weighty volumes.

A definite thumbs down.

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ABC of Sleep Disorders, edited by C.M. Shapiro. Pp. 90, illustrated. BMJ, London, 1993. Paperback £12.95.

It has been estimated that up to one in seven of patients in the Western world suffer from a long-term sleep disorder. However, the practice of sleep medicine is a recent and rapidly developing subject and, in the UK, we have lagged

behind other countries in developing specialized facilities for the investigation and management of chronic sleep disorders.

ABC of Sleep Disorders is a collection of short articles, that have recently been published in the *British Medical Journal*. The book is edited by Professor Colin Shapiro from Canada, who is one of the world's leading experts on sleep disorders. He has also co-authored a number of other contributions, that come from all over the world. Despite the recent recognition of the importance of sleep medicine, there is very little formal tuition in either the undergraduate or postgraduate medical curricula on sleep disorders, and this book has been compiled to bridge this deficiency.

The book started with chapters on the epidemiology and functions of sleep. There is a short but good chapter on the sleep apnoea syndrome and its treatment, and an interesting chapter on the subject of medical problems during sleep. I enjoyed the chapter on circadian rhythms and sleep problems that involve the body clock, and also the relationship between sleep and the immune system. Sleep problems in the elderly are emphasized, especially with our ageing population. There are five chapters at the end on the effects of drugs on sleep, including the effects of illicit drugs, and drug addiction and withdrawal. The book concludes with a chapter on the legal aspects of sleep and alertness, warning doctors of some of the legal problems that could arise.

The book is very well illustrated, with clear diagrams, useful tables and some colour photographs. It should be read by all doctors, whether in hospital or general practice, and provides concise information on the management of the whole spectrum of sleep disorders. Greater awareness of the nature and incidence of sleep disorders will lead to earlier diagnosis and treatment, with reduction in the morbidity from this common problem.

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