

## Book reviews

### Medical education

**Getting into a residency. A guide for medical students**, 4th edn, V Iserson. pp xx + 526, illustrated. Galen Press, USA, 1996. \$31.95, paperback

This is the latest edition of a popular guide to assist primarily US medical students in the specialty selection and residency application process. It fulfils this purpose admirably, being both written in a very readable style and extremely detailed - even to the extent of including a paragraph and diagram on how to pack a suitcase for attending an interview! Useful advice for international medical graduates wishing to undergo residency training is also included.

Although obviously geared to the US system, medical students in the UK, where the principles of career planning, choosing a specialty, job application and interview technique are equally applicable, could usefully read this book

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**Medical education review**, D Faux, C Ball, eds. pp 72. Corbett Press, Stourbridge, 1996. £35.00 annually, quarterly paperback

It is one of life's paradoxes that a response to the increasing volume of literature is to further increase the literature. The editorial panel of the *Medical Education Review* seek to help busy medical educators get the most from their reading time, and they could succeed.

*Medical Education Review* is a slim quarterly publication, which contains expert reviews of recent papers on medical education from over 20 journals. All of the papers reviewed in the issue I saw (May 1996) were published in 1995. A succinct commentary on the paper is followed by a short abstract written by the reviewer. The paper is awarded a number of stars for importance and smiley faces for ease of reading.

As the editors themselves acknowledge, opinions differ, and within very few pages I found that I agreed more with some reviewers than with others, but this increased my enjoyment. Anyone intending to use this journal should read the 'Notes for Reviewers'. These were concise, and salutary for those of us who write papers.

I found the journal very useful. It looks as though the article reviews will appear at about the same time as they become available on MEDLINE, and the classification of the papers and the brief commentary could save the busy reader quite a bit of time.

My one suggestion is that the editors should consider including an index of the sources used.

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### Fraud

**Fraud and misconduct in medical research**, 2nd edn. S Lock, F Wells, eds. pp xx + 293, BMJ, London 1996. £29.95, hardback

In *The Hunting of the Snark*, Lewis Carroll relates that Alice said to Humpty "If you tell me a thing three times I believe it". This is the second edition of Lock and Wells's book. Hopefully it will not require a third edition before National Authorities decide to follow the examples of the US and Denmark in setting up central machinery for the investigation of medical scientific fraud. The historical catalogue of deceptions and misdemeanours is enough to make one shudder. How common scientific fraud is remains unknown but, if we measure it by the yardstick that there are no grades of honesty, then such infringements are probably much more common than any of us would care to admit. All the more important, therefore, that preventive rather than punitive measures are put in place. Better education and supervision and the removal of the pressures entailed in the 'publish or perish' philosophy are the most important.

In the 18 chapters of this book, all of the players in research fraud are given their say: academics, general practitioners, journal editors, the pharmaceutical industry, contract research organisations, the media, the legal profession and the patients themselves. There is much practical guidance on detection, reporting and prevention. The book also has an international perspective with contributions from the US, Denmark, France and Germany. The editors must be congratulated on this second edition. Given that its contents are read and digested by all those who participate in biomedical research, a third edition may not be needed.

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### Ophthalmology

**Ophthalmology revision aid**, PT Khaw, *et al.* pp vii + 197. BMJ, London, 1996. £22.95, paperback

This is an updated edition of the highly successful pocket revision aid in ophthalmology. It is aimed primarily at ophthalmic trainees preparing for postgraduate examinations as well as optometrists. Each section begins with a succinct account of basic sciences, including anatomy, physiology and pharmacology, followed by a resumé of essential clinical facts. Useful information is also provided on several topics that are often poorly covered in standard textbooks, for example, visual standards for driving and the definition and criteria for blind registration. The sections on neuro-ophthalmology and medical ophthalmology contain concise ac-

counts of ocular manifestations of various medical conditions and will be of interest to a general medical audience. The book sets out information in note form with concise lists that should prove useful in helping the student commit material to memory. However, by its very nature, it can only be used in conjunction with standard textbooks. As a revision aid, it should continue to remain highly popular amongst its intended audience. MRCP candidates may also want to consult this pocket aid for its sections on neurology and medical ophthalmology.

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**Diabetes and the eye**, HM Towler, JA Patterson, S Lightman. BMJ, London, 1996. £99.00, CD ROM

I received this CD ROM with interest. The leaflet described it as a 'unique interactive program offering hands-on learning of all aspects of diabetic retinopathy'. I had used our hospital library CD ROM in the past to help me with literature searches but I am otherwise a novice at this technology. I enlisted the help of a colleague who possesses her own CD ROM at home. After several hours she found that this CD ROM was relatively 'user friendly' with loading instructions simple to follow. However, she reported difficulty in accessing some of the facilities. Together we spent some considerable time browsing through the material and tried out the visual tutorials and multiple-choice questions. The latter were interesting enough but the visual tutorials were not precise and did not indicate the abnormalities on the fundus photographs. Although the illustrations were generally of good standard, some were too small. Some screens were difficult to read and the colours red on blue may cause a problem to some users. The subject of retinopathy screening was not clear enough and we had difficulty in looking up the appropriate references. Our hospital librarian has reservations about acquiring more CD ROMS as she finds that few people use them and that they are impractical for busy doctors who want to drop into the library to quickly look something up. I suspect that most doctors or postgraduate centres would rather spend £99.00 on a well written textbook, with a comprehensive reference list and good illustrations clearly labelled.

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