

# PostScript

## BOOK REVIEWS

The reviewers have been asked to rate these books in terms of four items: readability, how up to date they are, accuracy and reliability, and value for money, using simple four point scales. From their opinions we have derived an overall "star" rating: \* = poor, \*\* = reasonable, \*\*\* = good, \*\*\*\* = excellent.

### Handbook of Clinical Skills.

By Jane Dacre and Peter Kipelman. (Pp 320; £14.95.) Manson Publishing, 2002. ISBN 1-874545-57-X. \*\*\*\*

As mentioned in the preface, this deceptively little book (with small print) is aimed at young clinicians in training.

The book is divided into 12 chapters covering all major systems, but has devoted a lot of space to history taking, note keeping, obtaining consent, the nervous system (a common concern for trainees), as well as guidance on psychiatric and paediatric assessment. This is unusual, but extremely useful, when compared with similar books on the market.

This book is well structured with good "bullet" points, diagrams, and quality coloured pictures making it most easy to read. I was particularly impressed by the inclusion of applied anatomy and physiology before each chapter and the picture format of the checklist for history taking and examination in individual systems. There is also a detailed step-by-step guide on practical procedures—for example, siting an intravenous cannula, setting "the giving set", performing electrocardiography and lumbar puncture etc, which trainees are expected to know how to perform despite being gradually de-skilled by current NHS practice.

My only criticisms are that the text tends to be a little long winded and cerebrospinal fluid pressure measurement is omitted in the guide on lumbar puncture procedure. I was surprised at the unnecessary inclusion of the technique of upper gastrointestinal endoscopy when bronchoscopy has not been mentioned.

Overall, I considered this little gem a worthwhile possession for all trainees, though I am not certain that it is of the right size to be carried in the pockets of their white coats!

**N Lo**

Consultant Physician, Leicester General Hospital, Leicester, UK

### Recent Advances in Surgery. 25th Ed.

Edited by Colin Johnson and Irving Taylor. (Pp 229; £32.95.) Royal Society of Medicine Press Ltd, 2002. ISBN 1-85315-508-X. \*\*\*\*

A careful read of this series is virtually "compulsory" for all candidates for the intercollegiate final FRCS examination in general surgery. It is also required reading for all busy consultants and general surgeons, so that we feel faintly "guilty" if we haven't done it!

This 25th edition is a worthy successor with the usual editors who are again very successful in avoiding repetition and mutual contradiction between the various chapters, which are written mainly by specialist registrars with consultant guidance. The book presumes a good sound knowledge of general surgery and is, in my opinion, too advanced for MRCS candidates.

It is quite good as a "dip in" source for consultants and specialist registrars in allied specialties, starting with the useful summary entitled "key points for clinical practice" which comes at the end of each chapter.

The chapter on "Genes and the surgeon" is aimed at the senior ignoramus (like myself) and at least gives me some idea of what they are all talking about! I was, however, sorry that no mention was made of the interplay between family genetic studies and the securing of life insurance, which is so essential to having a mortgage.

I gained a lot from reading the chapters on "Postoperative pain control" (although there was no detailed discussion of what to do with a patient whose epidural was failing to control the postoperative pain) and "Perioperative nutritional support", where there is controversy between those advocating hyperalimentation and the minimalists. They both seem to agree that hyperglycaemia is bad and should be controlled pretty aggressively.

The account of angioplasty for critical limb ischaemia was very clear, as was the chapter on PET scans. The final chapter is an overview of current recent randomised controlled trials in general surgery and makes a useful check list.

My advice to general surgeons and their specialist registrars is buy it and read it from cover to cover. Other people can and should dip into it.

**M J Kelly**

Consultant Colorectal Surgeon, National Lead Clinician for Colorectal Cancer, Leicester General Hospital, Leicester, UK

### Influenza in Practice.

By Roy Jennings and Robert C Read. (Pp 56; ; £14.95.) Royal Society of Medicine Press Ltd, 2002. ISBN 1-85315-514-4. \*\*\*\*

If you think that the flu is nothing more than a heavy cold then I thoroughly recommend this compact and accessible book. The authors, a senior virologist and infectious diseases specialist from Sheffield, present the key issues clearly and succinctly.

As a GP I found it accessible and relevant. The layout is easy on the eye. I read it in an afternoon. The sections on diagnosis and management were particularly helpful. The mechanics of antigenic drift and its relevance to vaccination is especially well explained. There is a very helpful list of relevant web sites. I was startled to discover that the pig is

a genetic cocktail shaker capable of blending two simultaneous influenza virus infections into a new strain and passing it on to humans.

The cost effectiveness of antiviral therapy is a major issue. I suspect that many GPs will hesitate about prescribing zanamivir at £24 for one day's reduction in symptom duration. Although subsequent antibiotic prescribing may be reduced by 40%, does prescribing zanamivir reduce hospital admissions and mortality?

I have only one quibble. At £14.95 for just over 50 pages this book is pricey.

In 1918 more people died from the Spanish Flu than died in the Great War. The next spin of the influenza virus genetic roulette wheel could create an infectious agent that would make today's superbugs look positively effete. As the authors point out, influenza may be considered to be one of the last great uncontrolled plagues of humankind.

**S Longworth**

East Leicester Medical Practice, Leicester, UK

### ABC of Upper Gastrointestinal Disease.

By Robert P H Logan, Adam Harris, J J Misiewicz, and J H Baron. (Pp 54; £14.95.) BMJ Books, 2002. ISBN 0-7279-1266-6. \*\*\*\*

Symptoms that appear to arise from the upper gastrointestinal tract are extremely common and lead to an enormous workload for general practitioners as well as hospital doctors. The potential for inappropriate investigation and use expensive drugs is significant. This book provides a concise summary of disorders of the upper gastrointestinal tract and the efficient and cost effective management. The chapters addressing reflux, non-ulcer dyspepsia, and gallstones should be essential reading for medical students, trainees, and general practitioners. The pragmatic approach to reflux and non-ulcer dyspepsia is refreshing. The summary boxes on gallstones are commendable.

While the chapters on the epidemiology and pathophysiology of *Helicobacter pylori* are well written, they should be read by those entering gastroenterology or taking college examinations, rather than a general readership.

The main drawback with this series of publications is the lack of references or a "further reading list" to guide to interested reader.

Overall, the balance between brevity and detail is well struck. I strongly recommend it to medical students, trainees, and general practitioners. It will also provide useful background for those wishing to enter a career in gastroenterology.

**C S J Probert**

Consultant Senior Lecturer in Medicine, Bristol Royal Infirmary, Bristol, UK

## BOOKS RECEIVED

The receipt of these books is acknowledged and this listing must be regarded as sufficient return for the courtesy of the sender. Books that appear to be of particular interest will be reviewed space permitted. The journal does not publish unsolicited reviews.

**Panayiotopoulos Syndrome.** C P Panayiotopoulos, Associates Colin D Ferrie, Richard A Grunewald, Michael Koutroumanidis, Shaun Rowlinson, and Sue Sanders. (Pp 174; £45.00.) John Libbey & Co Ltd, 2002. ISBN 0-86196-619-8.

**The Insider's Guide to Medical Schools.** Edited by Ian Urmston, Kinesh Patel, and Jill Spencer. (Pp 208; £14.95.) BMJ Books, 2002. ISBN 0-7279-1638-6.

**Partners in Learning.** By Ian Welsh and Caron Swann. (Pp 183; £19.95.) Radcliffe Medical Press Ltd, 2002. ISBN 1-85775-555-3.

## DIARY

### Warwick University Short Course

9–12 December 2002: Techniques and Applications of Molecular Biology: A Course for Medical Practitioners. A four day residential course for those in the medical profession wishing to improve their understanding of the principles and applications of genetic engineering techniques. Details: Dr Charlotte Moonan, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL (tel 024 7652 3540; fax 024 7652 3701; email Charlotte.Moonan@warwick.ac.uk).

### Royal Society of Medicine Conferences

28 November 2002: Privacy in Health Research. This meeting will be in association with the Nuffield Trust, who will reporting on their new data privacy project.

29 November 2002: Shaken Baby Syndrome. This meeting looks at the current controversy, the latest research, and ways of diagnosing and treating children who have been abused in this way.

10 December 2002: Key Advances in Breast Cancer. This conference will debate recent controversies and oncologists, GPs, surgeons, and researchers will present the most important advances in breast cancer therapy and assess the effects on the future of treatment.

13 December 2002: Men's Sexual Health. This meeting looks at impotence and other sexual dysfunction, and a range of male sexual problems from STDs to prostate cancer, the effect of sex on the heart, and the male menopause.

For details of any of the above conferences contact Rosamund Snow at the Royal Society of Medicine, 1 Wimpole Street, London W1G 0AE (fax 020 7290 2992; web [www.rsm.ac.uk/press](http://www.rsm.ac.uk/press)).



# Have your say

eLetters

If you wish to comment on any article published in the *Postgraduate Medical Journal* you can send an eLetter using the eLetters link at the beginning of each article. Your response will be posted on *Postgraduate Medical Journal* online within a few days of receipt (subject to editorial screening).

[www.postgradmedj.com](http://www.postgradmedj.com)