

PostScript

BOOK REVIEW

The Medical Society of London 1773–2003.

Penelope Hunting. (Pp 344; £55+postage.) Medical Society of London, 2003 (available at 11 Chandos Street, London W1G 9EB). ISBN 0905082-35-00.

The distinguished medical historian, Dr Penelope Hunting, has now produced a fascinating account of the Medical Society of London just as she did with her histories of the Society of Apothecaries (1998) and the Royal Society of Medicine (2001). This new book is privately published by the Society and recounts its 230 years as a London medical playhouse and the doctors who have strutted and enlivened its stage. What a stage and what players. The Duke of Edinburgh, in his elegant foreword, describes the Society as a forum for physicians, surgeons and apothecaries; where they could share their knowledge, experience and discuss problem cases, prevailing epidemics, and advances in therapy. Very much what the *Postgraduate Medical Journal* does effectively today. From 1825 reports of meetings could be read in the *Lancet*. Occasionally the proceedings reached the pages of a national newspaper or a parliamentary desk. The excitement generated by Jenner's discovery of smallpox vaccinations was followed in 1818 by news of the first human blood transfusion; followed by anaesthesia and of bold surgery that became possible; and of Listerism expounded by the man himself. These and other medical milestones that came before the Society included Röntgen's rays, laryngology by Morell Mackenzie, dermatology by one of its Presidents, Sir Erasmus Wilson, and Alexander Fleming's discovery of penicillin. Orators included Hughlings Jackson, Jonathan Hutchinson, orthopaedic surgeon William Adams, Lord Horder, Manson Bahr, Dickson Wright, Lord Brock, and Julia Neuberger.

This book is a treasure trove of information for authors, biographers, and speakers. There

are appendices from 1773 onwards listing Presidents of the Society, Fothergillian medallists, Lettsonian lecturers, Orators, and Registrars.

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Questions for the MRCS vivas.

Jeff Garner and Peter Goodfellow. (Pp 335; £19.99.) Hodder Arnold, 2004. ISBN 0-34081292-3.

The problem with textbooks of surgery is that they don't present information in the way that it is asked in surgical vivas. The MRCS examiners know this, and the candidates usually find out when it's too late. This book tries to address these issues and the authors are to be congratulated. The book is reasonably priced, easy to read, and deals with all the various sections of the MRCS examination. Each question is immediately followed by the recommended answer so you don't have to go searching at the end of sections etc.

The topics covered are very varied and comprehensive. I spent a long time trying to catch the authors out with old chestnuts such as the oxygen delivery equation, action potentials, holes in the skull base, etc but they were all there when I looked. However one or two topics were missing such as atelectasis and FRC, how much carbohydrate and lipid for nutrition, what happens to lung volumes after pneumonectomy, but you can't have everything.

On the whole if you read this book you will be very well prepared for the MRCS vivas. It is one of the best and most comprehensive available and I now recommend it to all our local senior house officers when they come to teaching sessions. If I were taking the MRCS examination, I would base my revision around this book and the potential viva questions that I might be asked.

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Surgery MCQs and EMQs.

Rowan W Parks, Tom Diamond. (Pp 172; £23 50.) Greenwich Medical Press, 2003. ISBN 1-84110-186-9.

Surgery MCQs and EMQs does exactly as its authors suggest—which is, through its carefully constructed questions covering a broad range of surgical topics set out in subsections for clarity and ease of use, it allows efficient revision for intercollegiate MRCS candidates and final year medical students alike. This book presumes a basic core knowledge of the practice of surgery in general and ideally should be used in conjunction with *Fundamentals of Surgical Practice* (by the same authors). However it may be used independently as a wrong answer from the reader in either the MCQ or EMQ section is corrected by an appropriate, succinct teaching bullet point. Relevant and validated MCQs/EMQs testing the surgical trainees' syllabus are notoriously difficult to construct but the authors are to be congratulated upon their efforts.

Surgery MCQs and EMQs offers a selected revision of topics for the surgical tyro in a friendly portable form (pocket filler size) and as such it is a welcome addition to its genre.

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DIARY

An Introduction to Bioinformatics: a practical approach

20–21 September 2004, University of Warwick. A short course for those wishing to gain a practical understanding of the applications of bioinformatics. Contact: Dr Charlotte Moonan, Biological Sciences, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL (tel: 024 7652 3540, email: Charlotte.Moonan@warwick.ac.uk).