BOOK REVIEWS

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Core Topics in General and Emergency Surgery (3rd edn)

SIMON PATERSON-BROWN

EXTENT P/H	435 pages, Hardback
PRICE/ISBN	£67.00 0702027332
PUBLISHER	Elsevier (Amsterdam), 2005
REVIEWER	Dominic Slade
STAR RATING	*****

I first came across the second edition of this book while studying for the intercollegiate Part 3 examination in general surgery last year. It was recommended to me by a previously successful candidate and initially I couldn't really see what it offered over other surgical textbooks earmarked for my revision programme. However, it quickly became apparent that not only does this text meet a genuine need – it does so in a concise, focused and authoritative manner. Although other texts may cover some of the topics found in this book, it is the compilation of diverse emergency conditions and their management in well laid-out chapters that is its unique selling point.

Now in its third edition, the authors have remained true to the original concept – a text written by practising surgical authorities on key topics. The layout is excellent with small 'scalpel codes' throughout the chapters to highlight evidence-based recommendations, all clearly and comprehensively referenced at the end of the chapter. Some chapters lend themselves very well to this concept with subheadings posing a management controversy and the 'scalpel code' text answering it with key published findings. Illustrations are all black and white and are mostly line drawings. Many chapters have useful tables summarising key papers in a particular field. There are a number of excellent flow diagrams throughout highlighting a stepwise approach to the management and decision-making involved with emergency patients.

The scope of the book covers all areas of general emergency surgery, including paediatric emergencies. It also offers chapters on evidence-based practice, measurement of health outcomes and health economics, day-case surgery, elective hernia surgery, patient and surgical risk assessment and peri-operative surgical management. Although some of these topics are potentially dreary, they are enlivened by the authors' explanation of their importance in clinical practice. The first two chapters are particularly useful for those with limited academic experience contemplating a critical review of a surgical paper. They include excellent explanations of key concepts such as meta-analysis and quality-adjusted life-years.

The new edition remains little changed in structure but the substance has been revised, updated and added to, including superb chapters on abdominal trauma by Ken Boffard, on sepsis and intensive care by Brian Rowlands and Nick Everitt, and

a revised and updated chapter on deep vein thrombosis and prophylaxis which has to be the most comprehensive review of the subject I have read. Although this text is clearly a very useful revision tool for the emergency surgery section of the intercollegiate exam, it could also rightfully take a place on an emergency theatre bookshelf for consultation in the wee small hours.

Oxford Handbook of ENT and Head and Neck Surgery

ROGAN CORBRIDGE, NICHOLAS STEVENTON

EXTENT P/H	444 pages, Paperback
PRICE/ISBN	£24.95 0198564929
PUBLISHER	Oxford University Press (Oxford), 2006
REVIEWER	Andy Scott
STAR RATING	****

The *Oxford Handbooks* are a well-known series of publications that have armed many a generation of medical students and junior doctors with a pocketful of useful information whenever starting on any new clinical attachment. The original one on clinical medicine was almost an essential white coat item to be carried everywhere along with stethoscope, pen, notebook, tourniquet, British National Formulary, etc. This most recent addition to the series is a most welcome summary of current ENT practice.

The back cover states that this book will be 'an invaluable resource for trainees and consultants in ENT, specialist nurses, general practitioners, and allied health professionals'. While I would not dispute this, the main target audience is clearly the medical student and junior doctor as with other books in the series and it is representatives from these groups who are acknowledged as advisers along the way.

The book is well set out, beginning with an overview of what the specialty is all about and how to get the most out of an ENT attachment. The main subject matter is generally well covered with chapters organised into anatomical sites. There are also chapters on common methods of presentation, emergencies and practical procedures, all cross referenced with the other chapters so that the book can be used in a problem-orientated way. This makes it especially valuable as a pocket companion on the wards.

ENT is a specialty that has a lot of involvement with other health care professionals and it is good to see the roles of the audiologist, hearing therapist, speech and language therapist, dietician, ear-care nurse and cancer nurses discussed in a separate chapter. It is probably impossible to include everybody who supports different departments, although perhaps balance physiotherapists and teachers of the deaf would be useful inclusions in future.

I must admit I had one or two niggles reading the book. The classification of chronic suppurative otitis media into safe or unsafe and tubotympanic or attico-antral is arguably less preferable to the more recent and simpler one of cholesteatoma or not and active or not. Similarly, I would not personally put 'recurrent vestibulopathy' in the same diagnostic box as 'vascular loop syndrome'. I also wonder whether some specialists would take issue with post-nasal drip as a cause of chronic cough. That said, these are issues that occupy hours of specialist debate and often whole ENT conferences, so the authors can probably be forgiven for including their own views.

Finally, I wonder whether the inclusion of more definitions and classifications may make this a useful book for those revising for postgraduate ENT examinations. This would obviously have to be carefully balanced against not making it too dry or complicated for the rest of the readership. Overall, I felt that this was an excellent book and would wholeheartedly recommend it to its target audience of medical students and juniors. One or two minor changes and inclusions could broaden its appeal still further.

Ear, Nose and Throat and Head and Neck Surgery (3rd edn)

RS DHILLON, CA EAST

EXTENT P/H	123 pages, Paperback
PRICE/ISBN	£25.99 0443073112
PUBLISHER	Churchill Livingstone (London), 2006
REVIEWER	Nicholas Marks
STAR RATING	****

This is the third edition of this book and, as with each edition, the tendency is to increase the breadth and scope of information covered. ENT and head and neck surgery has become increasingly subspecialised. The main authors have, therefore, sought specialist input but at the same time have tried to retain the original target audience and homogeneity of style. It is aimed quite clearly at those new to the specialty. It is a primer for those starting in this field: medical students, GPs developing a special interest, nurses and paramedics, and junior doctors in the specialty who need a working guide.

The format is described as an 'illustrated colour text' and each topic is dealt with on a double-page spread. Compressing all the information on any particular subject into a set space has made the authors select carefully what they include as essential information. The presentation includes liberal use of colour in photographs, drawings, diagrams, and tables, all within a soft-covered A4 book. At the end of each section there is a summary box. It is an attractive presentation and easy to find the information one requires

speedily. The text is brief and to the point. It is highly didactic and, as such, generates some controversial statements, although none of these matter too much considering at whom the book is aimed. Indeed, they may be useful talking points if the book is used as a teaching resource.

The photographs are excellent in demonstrating disease processes well and will aid diagnosis. Those of the tympanic membrane and oral cavity were particularly good. There might be scope to increase their number and range in future editions. Some of the diagrams, in contrast, seemed a little laboured and added nothing to what had already been said in the text. For example, a photograph of an adenoidal child would have been far more useful than the size:age distribution graph, the details of which had already been described in the text. Also, the diagram to explain the tuning fork tests just didn't.

The authors have elected to exclude virtually all operative detail. This is entirely correct for their target readership, most of whom are unlikely to be operating and it helps to keep the book concise. Those who buy this book are likely to use it to dip into to support their learning programme, to help before seeing a patient with a known problem or for pre-examination revision. It competes with web-based materials and, as such, its great strength is portability and the facility to add one's own notes. One of the few criticisms, therefore, is its large format. It just is not pocket-sized. Overall, however, one would have to conclude that it achieves what it sets out to do and will continue to be a valuable resource for those looking for a concise and readily accessible grounding in the fundamentals of the specialty.

Arthroscopic and Endoscopic Spinal Surgery: Text and Atlas (2nd edn)

PARVIZ KAMBIN

EXTENT P/H	376 pages, Hardback
PRICE/ISBN	£103.00 1588295222
PUBLISHER	Humana (New Jersey), 2005
REVIEWER	Jonathan Lucas
STAR RATING	**

This is a multi-author text with 28 authors covering the subject of arthroscopic and endoscopic surgery principally of the lumbar spine. There are additional chapters covering vertebroplasty and kyphoplasty, techniques in pain management, interspinous implant for spinal stenosis, chemonucleolysis, nucleus replacement and frameless stereotactic imaging techniques. The editor is one of the pioneers and innovators of percutaneous and arthroscopic spinal surgery so the content is presented from the perspective of the enthusiast for these techniques. The book is principally a text on how to perform the procedures and is richly illustrated. However, there