edged and described briefly in the chapter covering new interventions for varicose veins. Nonetheless, the brevity of the reference may leave the reader having to look up the guidelines to be fully in the picture. We also note that, unusually for a comprehensive 270-page text, there is no index. This is one thing that has not changed since the first edition.

Taken as a whole, the authors are to be congratulated on the very readable text with superb colour illustrations and photographs that are featured throughout every chapter. In this respect, the book is certainly ahead of others with which it might compete and with its new more sophisticated presentation we welcome its arrival.

General Surgery, 11th edn

HAROLD ELLIS, SIR ROY CALNE, CHRISTOPHER WATSON

EXTENT P/H	408 pages, Paperback
PRICE/ISBN	£18.99, 1405139110
PUBLISHER	Blackwell (London), 2006
REVIEWER	Andrew Evans
STAR RATING	****

'The ideal medical student at the end of the clinical course will have written his or her own textbook.' I was very glad to see this most useful piece of advice still standing on the very first line of the introduction of this book. It is almost a challenge to put it back on the shelf and get on with the suggested task. But no, the book is still worth reading.

In a world of problem-based learning, the student is supposed to bring together facts on a need-to-know basis. Although this has its strengths, the building of an understanding can only occur within a framework. An awareness of that framework is vital and this book by virtue of its structure is the best climbing frame available. It provides the scaffolding from within which a student may safely forage. It is true that there are no opportunities to draw out the similarities between, say, appendicitis, cholecystitis and diverticulitis but such things are provided by other texts.

The font, font size, use of colour (this edition introduces blue), diagrams and tables are well chosen. They serve to communicate without taking undue attention. There is a large, good-quality index. The unnecessary photographs previously at the start of each chapter have been removed.

Famous statues come, in time, to be covered with bird droppings. Well-established texts may have a similar fate because editorial process quite rightly begins by making small tweaks and additions. Eventually sentences begin to sag beneath these accretions and a time arrives when a fresh perspective is needed.

The section dealing with the treatment of cholecystitis may have reached such a point. For example, the sentence 'elective cholecystectomy is commonly performed about 6

weeks later because of the undoubted danger of further attacks' now suffers the appendage 'although early urgent cholecystectomy during the first 72 hours of admission offers an excellent alternative to the patient optimising recovery and minimising the disruption of their normal lifestyle'. This no longer reads well; more importantly, I think the naive student would come away from this chapter without a good understanding of the relationship between cholecystectomy, stones in the duct, ERCP and MRCP. The topic of pseudo-obstruction remains poorly covered. For example, the last page of the paralytic ileus chapter is almost empty and could be filled to good effect with some text to cover this not uncommon clinical problem.

These are, however, relatively small points as the book is still the best general surgical textbook for medical students. The coverage is wide, the writing is usually clear, there are few omissions and it is not too long or too heavy even though it has grown slightly.

Operative Pediatric Surgery, 6th edn

LEWIS SPITZ, ARNOLD CORAN

EXTENT P/H	136 pages, Hardback
PRICE/ISBN	£250.00, 9780340813409
PUBLISHER	Hodder Arnold (London), 2006
REVIEWER	Shailinder Singh, Leela Kapila
STAR RATING	****

The previous (fifth) edition of this book was published in 1995 and since then there have been several major advances in various fields of paediatric surgery. This timely edition includes several new chapters such as minimally invasive surgery for conditions in the chest and abdomen, including the ergonomics of laparoscopic surgery. Other new topics covered are the Nuss operation for pectus deformities of the chest, laparoscopic fundoplication, Heller's cardiomyotomy, pull-through procedures in the neonate, interventional radiology, the principles of bariatric, maternal-fetal surgery and conjoined twins.

The format of the book, which is formal, is similar to the previous editions, with each chapter commencing with a brief history of the condition, indications for surgery, position for surgery, incision, the operative procedure and alternatives when indicated, postoperative care, complications together with a very useful list of further reading. The medical artists have improved the effective, simple black-and-white line drawings and few radiographs. The layout of the book is uncomplicated and the text both easy to read and comprehend. The hardback black binding with its only coloured diagram on the cover gives the book an elegant appearance.

The authority of this book is enhanced and established by the inclusion of several new authors contributing in their field

of specialty and supraspecialty in children's surgery. The two editors have selected contributors mainly from the US, a third from the UK and a very few from other parts of the world. This is sadly reflected in the adoption of the American spelling of words such as esophagus in place of oesophagus, which leads to confusion when referring to the index.

This book, as the editors note, is the operative manual of choice for paediatric surgeons though probably limited to the developed English-speaking countries. At a cost of £250 few in the developing countries could buy a personal copy. The other drawback is that there is a dearth of tropical children's surgical pathology. Not every surgeon could afford the luxury of using a laparoscope to view the opposite inguinal opening when performing a simple herniotomy, especially when more than one case is operated on in the day-surgery unit. Could this give rise to medicolegal problems as this is not routine practice in this country?

In this edition, a few chapters from the previous one have been rightly excluded as many paediatric surgeons do not currently perform surgery for cleft lip and palate and complex hand deformities. In the next edition, however, the editors may wish to include a useful chapter on the management of adhesion obstruction, a common surgical emergency seen in childhood. With increasing incidence of HIV and hepatitis infections, it might also be helpful to include a paragraph or two in the general section I of the book. There is an increasing demand for evidence-based medicine. Could a book on operative surgery be fully evidence-based rather than experience-based?

The reviewers wish to give a star rating of four to this book and would recommend it as an essential reference book for all libraries, practicing paediatric surgeons and trainees in paediatric surgery.

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