Pearce's Surgical Companion. Essential notes for postgraduate exams

OLIVER PEARCE

EXTENT P/H	418 pages, Hardback
PRICE/ISBN	£65.00 9781903378489
PUBLISHER	tfm (Shrewsbury), 2009
REVIEWER	Christian Wakefield
STAR RATING	★★

This book is written principally as a study aid for surgical trainees preparing for the MRCS exam. The first section comprising four chapters is devoted to the relevant applied basic science: pathology and the practice of surgery, physiology and critical care, anatomy and operative surgery. The second section covers the fields of general surgery and the breadth of surgical subspecialties, culminating with the final chapter, which provides tips for the would-be candidate for clinical examinations. While the book is clearly targeted at surgical trainees, it would be a useful text for undergraduates looking for a more clinically focused reference book.

The reader will need to accept that since the book covers a wide field, the brevity of descriptions makes the writing style appear rushed. Regrettably this quest for brevity affects the accuracy of the message. For example, in the section on the treatment of acute pancreatitis, the author states: 'Treatment of an acute attack of pancreatitis is for the most part supportive': while not incorrect, it misses the importance of how the management is dictated by the severity and aetiology of the attack. To overcome these constraints in the short text style, flow diagrams/algorithms and tables would have been helpful. There are some concerns over the accuracy of the material, which have been highlighted elsewhere (*World J Surg* 2010; 34: 368–69.). The material seems to have been compiled from the author's own revision notes and interpretations, without robust corroboration from expert sources or authorities of the subjects.

That being said, the production quality of the book overall is good, with clear text and helpful black and white line drawings. Indexing is accurate and largely the layout of sections and chapters is consistent. However, there could be more uniformity with the themes and contents of the grey note boxes. This book will provide the trainee with a good basis and syllabus for revision. I expect that the second edition, after rigorous and meticulous proofreading, will produce a first-class MRCS textbook.

Otolaryngology and Head and Neck Surgery

GILES WARNER, ANDREA BURGESS, SURESH PATEL, PABLO MARTINEZ-DEVESA, ROGAN CORBRIDGE

EXTENT P/H	896 pages, Paperback
PRICE/ISBN	£42.95 9780199230228
PUBLISHER	Oxford University Press (Oxford), 2009
REVIEWER	Stephen Hayes
STAR RATING	★★★★★

The specialist handbook in otolaryngology and head and neck surgery delivers a comprehensive text, encompassing all the major subspecialist areas of ENT in a very concise, well-organised and easy-to-use portable text. It covers the major subspecialties of ENT and contains sections on evidence-based medicine, audit, breaking bad news and critical appraisal. Written in a simple bullet-text style, it can be used as a quick reference guide, useful in many situations. Particularly useful is the section on 'ENT Numbers', which provides important statistics, values and thresholds for a number of specific conditions and procedures in a well-displayed format.

Each chapter contains a comprehensive range of clinical conditions in a more than adequate level of detail for an ENT registrar, complemented by relevant anatomy and physiology where appropriate. There are stepwise guides to common operative ENT procedures, which are useful for more junior trainees and those revising for exams. Thoughtfully, Oxford University Press has deliberately left blank sections within the text for the reader to add his or her own notes or key points from recent guidelines, trials or papers to provide a personal, up-to-date version.

The portability, combined with the comprehensiveness of this text, makes this an excellent book, particularly suitable for the ENT registrar but also for the core surgical trainee with an interest in ENT. This handbook would serve as a very useful revision guide for both DOHNS and FRCS examinations. Overall, it is a useful companion for any ENT surgeon in training.