

Book Reviews

SECRETS OF SUCCESS: GETTING INTO FOUNDATION TRAINING

Marc A Gladman, Manoj Ramachandran, Mark J Portou. The Royal Society of Medicine Press. September 2008

Paperback, 182pp. £17.95. ISBN: 978-1-85315-886-5



This textbook, published in 2008, gives advice to Final Year students applying for the National Foundation Training Programme for F1 and F2 doctors. The problems with this application process over the past several years are well known to senior students, junior doctors, programme directors, postgraduate Deans, universities, the public and indeed politicians. This book is timely and is an effort to help students applying for their F1 and F2 positions. The difficulty with this book is that it will become rapidly out of date in such a changing field, but nonetheless it does give basic groundwork and advice on the completion of the application form.

Quite rightly, at the beginning of their textbook, in the preface, the authors have emphasised that the examples which they have provided in their text must not be copied nor modified as this would be plagiarism, which is looked upon very seriously.

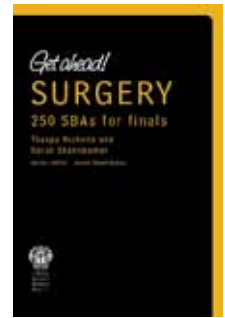
While the textbook was published in 2008, in this rapidly changing field, it is probably time for a new edition or at least a reprint with some changes. The book is up-to-date at the time of publication, including giving an overview of the Tooke Inquiry, a guide to the United Kingdom Medical Schools and the number of associated training positions, (Page 9). This is already dated and the next edition will require revision. There then follows a brief guide to United Kingdom Foundation Schools, with the Hospital Trusts associated, and the appropriate contact numbers. Again, in a changing field, these first few chapters will require revision over the next year or two. Thereafter, there is some information on the application process, which is relatively generic and useful. The following chapters relate to likely questions on the application form and how to complete them to maximise the chance of a successful application. While, of course, the questions change year by year, nonetheless many of the questions have a generic core. These chapters are very useful indeed, from such basic advice as reading the question repeatedly, while writing one's answer, to providing samples of topics such as coping under pressure, team working, prioritisation, the patient as a focus of care and professional integrity.

Overall this is a useful little book which can be recommended to senior students preparing for this all-important application. I would, however, finish this review by emphasising the caveat already mentioned by the authors, that on no account should students be tempted to plagiarise directly, or in a modified form, any of the examples provided in this text.

Prof Roy AJ Spence

GET AHEAD! SURGERY: 250 SBAS FOR FINALS

Theepa Nicholls, Saran Shantikumar. The Royal Society of Medicine Press. March 2009. Paperback. 225pp. £14.95. ISBN: 978-1-85315-727-1



This textbook, published in 2009, is aimed at Final Year students of Medicine sitting their Surgical examination paper. It contains 250 Single Best Answer questions. The layout is that the book contains five practice papers, each containing 50 questions. The student is advised to allow between 1-1½ hours per paper. The book gives the correct answer and, usefully, a brief commentary to that answer. There is a satisfactory, albeit short, examination-orientated discussion of the answer.

As with any textbook of this nature, there can be a few, albeit relatively minor, critiques such as the absence of the mention of laparoscopic surgery when discussing appendicectomy and perforated duodenal ulcer. The description of thyroid cancer would warrant a line or two on the usefulness of fine needle biopsy in most thyroid cancers apart from follicular tumour (in which it cannot distinguish benign from malignant). On Page 45, Question 1, on gallbladder incisions, it would be more appropriate to include a discussion of laparoscopic gallbladder incisions which are, by far, the most common method of surgical access for today's gallbladder procedures. In the index, under Thyroid Cancers, Pages 33 and 123 are given, but on Page 123 there is no mention of thyroid cancer. Leaving aside these relatively minor points, this book is a useful revision text for students undertaking Final Medicine examinations in Surgery.

The authors are relatively young, one being a Registrar in Emergency Medicine, the other being an academic Fellow in Vascular Surgery, and have a sense of the current standards of final surgical examinations in Medicine. The questions are in a modern format and the commentaries are, by and large, timely and up-to-date. The book can be recommended as a revision text in those anxious few months prior to medical finals.

Prof Roy AJ Spence

TOWARDS THE PREVENTION OF CANCER

Dr Amen Sibtain. The Royal Society of Medicine Press. October 2007. Paperback, 80pp. £25.00. ISBN: 978-1-85315-796-7



This book represents the contents of a symposium held in 2007 on the prevention of cancer. There is a slight misnomer in that the first half of the book does examine topics such as smoking, nutrition, alcohol, obesity etc. which relate specifically to cancer prevention, while the second half of the book relates to early detection and screening for particular cancers, such as colon, prostate and breast. Many of the presenters and contributors are well known in their field, such as Bruce Ponder on the genetic aspects of cancer, and Richard Peto on the role of smoking in

the causation of cancer. The textbook was published in 2007, and in this rapidly changing field, while the principles still do hold true, the specific details can become out of date speedily.

In terms of presentation, overall the font size is a little small with very few chapters broken up by diagrams or illustrations. Should, in future years, a report be published from a further symposium on this important topic, the publishers should look at the presentation style, to review font size and the inclusion of illustrations.

The majority of chapters are timely (in 2007). It would be of interest, in the breast cancer chapter, on Page 68, if the author would give his views on the thoughts of some senior breast specialists, that breast cancer screening may be picking up tumours so small (with the associated stresses and workload) that they would be clinically irrelevant in that woman's lifetime. This contrary view to the popularity of breast screening would be of interest to the reader.

The book finishes with the Jephcott Lecture entitled "Cancer Prevention – Vaccine Based Approaches" by Borysiewicz. This is a very useful overview on the current role (as of 2007) of cancer prevention based on vaccines.

Overall, this is a useful little book on both prevention of cancer, early diagnosis and some screening aspects, up-to-date (as at 2007). It is a helpful revision text for those undertaking examinations in Oncology-related subjects. The text would be useful to have on the bookshelves of doctors and health-related professions, as a reference source, on these important topics (with the caveat that the text was published in 2007). A text such as this becomes rapidly out of date over four to five years. Notwithstanding this caveat, this book can be recommended.

Prof Roy AJ Spence

RECENT ADVANCES IN GASTROENTEROLOGY 11

Editor: Christopher Probert. The Royal Society of Medicine Press. December 2008. Paperback, 228pp. £34.95. ISBN: 978-1-85315-710-3



This text, published in 2009, is No. 11 in the popular series of "Recent Advances". Many of the authors are based in the Bristol area. While most are senior, established Gastroenterologists, a number are Fellows and Specialist Registrars. Here and there the text is spoilt by spelling errors such as, on the list of contributors, the spelling of "Specialist Registrar", adjacent to Simon Monkhouse's name, is misspelled.

Overall, the text is well laid out although some diagrams, such as Fig. 1 on Page 97, are complex for the non-specialist. The topics include those of current clinical interest and importance, such as management of Barrett's oesophagus, variceal bleeding, obesity surgery and the clinical management of inflammatory bowel disease, along with some newer forms of treatment for irritable bowel syndrome. Most chapters are well supported with current and up-to-date references. The first chapter, on eosinophilic oesophagitis, an

emerging condition currently poorly understood, is a useful chapter for both the specialist Gastroenterologist and the trainee. The key points for clinical practice are placed in a useful box at the end of each chapter, such as that for Barrett's oesophagus on Page 25. Most illustrations are satisfactory, although Fig. 1 on Page 33, and also on page 204, the Bristol Stool Form Scale, is difficult to make out through poor reproduction. The chapter on variceal bleeding includes the potentially useful adjunct of treatment, namely self-expanding metal stents, although the data on their use are early.

The chapter on obesity surgery is timely, although perhaps more information on the current role of laparoscopic procedures would be appropriate. Again, a paragraph or two in this chapter on who should be undertaking laparoscopic obesity surgery, in terms of training and specialisation, would be of interest to future practitioners in this field. The liver imaging chapter is comprehensive, although Fig. 6 on Page 122 is difficult to decipher. The chapter on chronic pancreatitis – how should we diagnose it? – is a useful chapter both for specialist and the generalist and is well written with clear conclusions. Similarly, the new treatments for irritable bowel syndrome and recent advances in inflammatory bowel disease chapters are both well written and timely.

In summary, overall this is a useful book with good updates in a number of important clinical areas. This textbook should be on the shelf of the Gastroenterologist for review and should be browsed through by the trainee physician, especially those with an interest in gastroenterology, doing examinations. With some minor caveats, it can be recommended.

Prof Roy AJ Spence

BUZZED: THE STRAIGHT FACTS ABOUT THE MOST USED AND ABUSED DRUGS FROM ALCOHOL TO ECSTASY,

3RD ED.

Cynthia Kuhn, Scott Swartzwelder, Wilkie Wilson, Leigh Heather Wilson, Jeremy Foster.

WW Norton & Company Ltd. September 2008. Paperback, 367pp. £11.99. ISBN 978-0-393-32985-8



The slogan on the cover of this book is "Just Say Know". Aware that the simplistic ("Just say no!") approach of many drug education programmes has failed to deter adolescents from experimenting with and abusing drugs, the authors of this book aim to provide the reader with balanced, objective facts, based on their conviction "that people make better decisions with accurate information at hand."

The authors are involved in the BrainWorks Program at Duke University Medical Centre, and include two professors of pharmacology (Kuhn and Wilson) and a professor of psychology (Swartzwelder). The impetus for writing the book was their recognition of how little most adolescents, parents, lawmakers, - and even medical advisors - know about commonly used and abused drugs.

The book is divided into two main sections. The first part

deals with commonly used and abused drugs. They describe socially acceptable drugs such as alcohol, nicotine and caffeine; abused prescription drugs, such as steroids and analgesics and sedatives; and illicit substances, such as, Ecstasy, cocaine and hallucinogens. The drugs are discussed in terms of pharmacological class, common slang names, pharmacological effect (“The Buzz”), risks in overdose and other adverse effects. The range of drugs covered is fairly up to date, and includes substances such as gamma hydroxybutarate (GHB). Both the positive and negative effects of drugs are discussed – the debate about the dangers of cannabis is covered, along with the arguments for and against legalisation. Similarly they discuss the question of the possible long term neurotoxicity of Ecstasy and other amphetamine derivatives (so called “designer drugs”).

The second part of the book is much shorter and provides a simple introduction to neurobiology, pharmacology and addiction. Legal issues are also discussed, albeit from an American perspective.

In addition to these two main sections there is also a useful bibliography for those who wish to pursue topics in greater depth, a glossary of drug-related slang, and a colour photographic section which illustrates many of the drugs discussed.

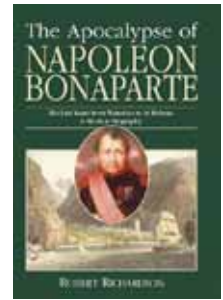
This book is well written and easy to read. It could be used as a resource to be consulted, dipped into simply for interest’s sake, or read from cover to cover. Pharmacology is presented in an interesting and accessible manner which does not require the reader to have a background in the life-sciences. And, whilst this is not a pharmacology textbook, the mechanisms of drug action are covered in some depth. However, specifically medical issues, such as treatment of overdose and addiction, are not covered. That this book is written from an American perspective limits the relevance of some sections, especially the discussion of legal issues. In their discussion about the dangers of drugs, whilst coming down hard against Ecstasy, the authors take a softer line than I would with regard to cannabis.

Overall, if you are looking for an up to date, accessible source of information regarding drugs of abuse, this book would be a good starting point.

Michael Trimble

THE APOCALYPSE OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

Robert Richardson. Quiller Publishing Ltd. May 2009. Hardback. 288pp. £20.00. ISBN: 978 18468 90635



For those interested in medical history, this book by Robert Richardson is an excellent read. Robert Richardson, who qualified in medicine at Oxford University, has become a freelance medical editor and has written a number of books on medical and surgical history. This book is a splendid insight to the latter years of Napoleon Bonaparte. It is superbly researched and gives remarkable detail of Napoleon’s medical illnesses, especially in the latter years of his life. There is a remarkable chapter (Chapter 19) on the postmortem performed on 6th May 1821 of Napoleon, which describes in considerable detail tuberculosis in his lungs and the adjacent pericardium. The examining doctor described how the internal surface of the stomach was taken up by a “cancerous ulcer” along the lesser curvature. The remainder of this chapter describes the intrigue and the various versions of Napoleon’s cause of death by those who surrounded him and the historians of that time (and following). Remarkably, it was Napoleon himself who surmised he had cancer of the stomach. It was he who requested (demanded) that he should have an autopsy for the benefit of his son in case he might inherit the cancerous growth. It was stated that, throughout his illness, he never complained and kept his character to the last! His disease was hereditary, his father having died of it, and his sister, the Princess Borghese, was also thought to have had cancer of the stomach.

This beautiful book is remarkably detailed, extremely well researched and gives rise to multiple intrigues which surrounded Napoleon’s latter life. For the serious students of medical history, the book is well referenced. I can recommend this book for those wanting a gentle read through medical history and a contemporaneous view of the times of the latter years of Napoleon. I would also recommend it for the student of medicine beginning his or her studies as an insight into the medical times of Napoleon and the remarkable description of his illness and of his autopsy in particular.

I enjoyed reading this text and can recommend it to a wide readership.

Professor Roy A J Spence