

Book Reviews

INTRODUCTION TO CLINICAL MEDICINE. Edited by H.L. Greene, R.J. Glassock, and N.A. Kelley. Published by B.C. Decker Inc. Philadelphia, Hamilton, BP794.

This attractive book is exactly what its title describes; there is no mistake that it is aimed at medical students entering their clerkship year. Fully 20% of the content is an interestingly written and valuable description of important hospital function such as medical record keeping, writing orders and prescriptions, optimal use of the laboratory, reading the medical literature and laudably includes descriptions of the roles of allied health care professionals such as physiotherapists, pharmacists etc.

The medical information content is divided into systems, however, the approach is not disease oriented but chapters are written to delineate the approach to presenting complaints. Most clinical clerks will find this a useful approach giving them insight into the thought processes involved in diagnosis. The chapters are short and generally easy to read with a reasonably standardized approach taken by the many authors. Brief sections are also devoted to common gynecologic, psychiatric, ENT and oral presenting complaints which are often seen in the offices of generalists. The illustrations are clear and simple, but relatively sparse. The clinical photographs used, particularly in dermatology and rheumatology, are of good quality.

I was struck immediately by the large number of algorithms, which vary in complexity. The first chapter devoted to medical problems, for example is devoted to lipid disorders and runs to nine pages, of which four are largely devoted to algorithms and the further two are taken up by full length tables. Most physicians will agree that diagnosis in management in internal medicine are algorithmic processes, however, most of us have learned medicine by generating our own mental algorithms based on knowledge and experience, and I am uncertain as to the efficacy of algorithms as an effective learning mechanism.

While this book allows generation a differential diagnosis, it offers little in disease description, thus the reader is forced to another text to fill the gaps — in some instances this can be a daunting task. The diverse manifestations of multi-system diseases e.g. sarcoid, are also poorly served by this book and the diagnostic approach does not serve the investigation of multiple complaints well. Consistent with this approach there is no therapeutics in the text apart from an appendix on commonly used drugs that is difficult to use and poorly laid out.

Potential buyers of this book should therefore be aware that they will also need to invest in companion texts on disease pathology and therapeutics, however, this book will assist the trainee in developing relevant differential diagnosis and investigation plans, skills that medical students find most challenging and difficult to acquire. The book might have a place on medical teaching units or emergency rooms when in the space of five minutes reading, one can determine the important diagnostic considerations and the investigations required.

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MENINGIOMAS. 1990. Edited by Ossama Al-Mefty. Published by Raven Press, New York. 630 pages.

The multi-authored text entitled *Meningiomas* is a welcome addition to the literature on meningiomas, a tumor group which can still present the neurosurgeon a considerable technical challenge. The text is divided into 48 chapters in 8 sections.

A short historical section introduces the challenge of the surgery of meningiomas. This chapter is a condensation of the paper by Al-Rodhan and Laws.¹ The second section consists of the biology and pathology of meningiomas. Chapters on meningioma associated cerebral edema, recurrent and malignant meningiomas and a chapter on meningiomas outside the central nervous system are included. The section is very well done although some repetition does occur. The third section deals with special considerations such as meningiomas in childhood and in the elderly, multiple meningiomas and body reactions to meningiomas. And there is a chapter on meningiomas in animals. The section on the imaging of meningiomas consists of chapters on CT, MRI, angiography and PET scanning. Chapters on adjuvant non-surgical treatment [radiation therapy, radiosurgery and hormonal manipulation] and chapters on adjuncts to surgical treatment [embolization, anesthesia and intraoperative monitoring] make up sections 5 and 6, and complete the first half of the text.

The 7th and largest section consists of 19 chapters each devoted to an anatomical tumor site. The chapters include, to varying degrees, incidence data, clinical findings appropriate to the anatomic site, imaging diagnosis and surgical techniques and pitfalls involved in the tumor extirpation. There is an appropriate emphasis on the basal tumors which are now more commonly undergoing radical surgical removal. Some of these chapters are very similar to those on the same subject in the text *Neurosurgery Update I* edited by Wilkins and Rengachary.²

Section 8 summarizes spinal meningioma presentation, imaging and treatment.

The first half of this text is an excellent review of the subject of meningiomas; the second half is an excellent reference work on specific anatomical tumor sites. This text will be a valued addition to institutional libraries and will be of interest to neurosurgeons at all levels of experience.

1. Al-Rodhan NRF, Laws ER: Meningioma: Historical study of the tumor and its surgical management. *Neurosurgery* 26:832-847, 1990.
2. Wilkins RH and Rengachary SS (ed.): *Neurosurgery Update I: Diagnosis, Operative Technique, and Neuro-Oncology*. McGraw-Hill, Inc. 1990.

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NEUROLOGIA PEDIATRICA. 1988. Edited by N. Fejerman and E.F. Alvarez. Published by Librería et Ateneo Editorial, Buenos Aires and Barcelona. 804 pages. Price not available.