



BOOK REVIEW

Lecture Notes on Clinical Medicine

Sixth edition. By David Rubenstein, David Wayne and John Bradley. Pp. vii + 360. Blackwell Publishing. 2002. ISBN 0-632-06505-2. List Price: £17.50. Price from SAMA Books: R205.00 (5% discount to members of SAMA).

Following its publication in 1976, this excellent book, now in its sixth edition, has been well known to successions of graduating classes of medical students.

I strongly endorse the authors' claim that it is of particular use to the young clinician — the final-year medical student and the registrar-trainee preparing for examinations. I would suggest that it is a must for the candidate in Medicine during the six months' lead up to the final examination, whether at undergraduate or postgraduate level.

It is handily divided into two sections — the first, headed 'The clinical approach', offers the reader a rapid clinical skills revision course which is systems based and authentic in suggesting efficient examination approaches; there are welcome explanations of the anatomical and physiological basis for physical signs, accompanied by lists of common causes.

The second section, entitled 'Essential background information' is just that...its organisation is again systems based, and it offers reminders of key basic science facts that underpin understanding of the clinical entities common to each system. Best of all are the 'Trials boxes'. They accompany each chapter and succinctly detail the randomised controlled trials, meta-analyses and Cochrane reviews upon which the modern physician makes evidence-based therapeutic decisions concerning the 'bread and butter' medical conditions of daily practice, e.g. stroke, diabetes, hyperlipidaemia, hypertension, ischaemic heart disease, heart failure, pulmonary embolus, HIV/AIDS.

While highly recommending that every candidate facing examinations purchase this little book, filled with easily digestible and important facts (at the very reasonable price of R205.00), I am pleased to add it to my bookshelf of user-friendly references.

912

Janet Seggie

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Medical Therapy of Breast Cancer

Edited By Zenon Rayter and Janine Mansi. Pp. xviii + 394. R1 190.00. Cambridge University Press. 2002. ISBN 0-521-49632-2.

The editors of this highly commendable publication have produced a most reader-friendly and informative reference book, which should not only be made available to those clinicians who deal with cancers of the breast, but also to researchers in the field and general practitioners.

The comprehensive approach to this important subject by this acknowledged panel of medical and scientific experts, coupled with the easy format of the text, makes this a most informative reference publication.

The introductory chapter, commencing with the first historical reporting of this condition by the ancient Egyptians and the important strides made with respect to the present patterns of investigation and management of this disease in the last 25 years, is very well referenced. Historically the authors chronicle the advances made not only in the management of this condition but also in the changing scientific concepts that have necessitated these changes.

Important issues such as familial breast cancer, the influence of BRCA 1 and BRCA 2 and other associated genes are well researched. Other chapters focus comprehensively on screening and chemoprevention of this condition. There are chapters devoted to the contentious issue of hormone replacement therapy and breast cancer and the currently accepted management of *in situ* breast cancer.

The chapters devoted to the role of surgery of the breast, axillary surgery, sentinel node biopsy in the management of the axilla, the timing of surgery and the place of reconstructive surgery are well presented and are pertinent to modern-day medical practice.

The role of radiotherapy relevant to local control and overall survival, the timing of this therapeutic modality, either with radical or palliative intent, is very relevant to the basic therapeutic approach to this condition and is well covered in the text.

Certain management issues such as adjuvant chemotherapy, adjuvant radiotherapy and predictors of response and resistance are well described. The role of and indicators for high-dose chemotherapy are comprehensively noted, as is the possible role of newer adjuvant therapies in the management of this disease. The role and indications for the use of the bisphosphonates, either to reduce the development of osseous metastases or in the management of hypercalcaemia are well described.

The chapters devoted to the palliative care of patients with

advanced breast cancer, incorporate all the many special medical problems that the clinician may encounter and clearly outline therapeutic strategies to manage pain due to disease extension, bone secondaries, visceral metastases and the terminal care of these patients.

This is a commendable edition and the contents are succinct to modern clinical practice of this disease.

I D Werner