

BOOK REVIEW

Human disease for dentistry

Farida Fortune Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004.
Price £29.95. 414 pages.

This is a soft covered textbook, and inexpensive intended to help dental students understand the manifestations of human diseases and disorders and the diagnostic services used in their investigations and treatment. The author is a Professor in the Oral Medicine Unit at St Bartholomew's and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, London.

The book consists of 17 chapters, covering areas such as patient assessment and surgical care; cardiovascular; gastrointestinal; nervous; renal; infections; eyes, ears, taste and smell; reproductive; respiratory; psychiatry; liver; haematology; endocrine and bone; disability; dermatology; and elderly and children. It contains numerous key points and considerable information, multiple boxes of summary points and a few figures and algorithms.

I embarked on reading the book with enthusiasm, being aware of the author's considerable qualifications and her areas of expertise. The material is up to date and fairly comprehensive.

However, a not inconsiderable amount of basic knowledge is assumed by the writer, which students might not necessarily have. Indeed, they may be searching for it in this text. For example, Box 2.2 indicates the need for antimicrobial prophylaxis in patients 'at risk', without defining at risk of what exactly (infective endocarditis). Similarly, Box 2.12 notes that patients may have pacemakers, but makes no further comment, and the relevance of pacemakers was not obvious here or elsewhere. Another example is p. 112, where the treatment of Bell's palsy is suggested to be acyclovir (actually the spelling is aciclovir) yet previously there was no mention of the common cause of Bell's palsy – which is herpes simplex virus. There are several similar examples.

Sadly, I found the cover which bears two colour photographs, somewhat misleading since the book itself does not contain those pictures and there are no other colour pictures within. There is no preface, no acknowledgements, no further reading suggested and little cross-referencing in the text. I was left unclear of the logic of the layout of the chapters.

Finally, there are some terms used which can have more than one spelling which could be confusing (e.g. Karotkoff/Korotkoff: brachycardia/bradycardia) but also enumerable spelling errors [e.g. p. 22 acetylgycosa-mine should be acetylglucosamine; p. 28 antibiotic should obviously be antibiomatic; p. 37 acyonotic should be acyanotic; p. 112 xerophthalmos which is really xerophthalmia (as shown correctly on p. 170), etc., etc.], and errors/confusions such as Box 2.13 where patients with congenital heart disease and ostium secundum ASD, mitral valve prolapse without regurgitation or 6 months postsurgery are said to be at risk of endocarditis, but I am certain the author meant to say at LOW risk; and p. 83 where Down syndrome is indicated to be an autoimmune disease which it very definitely is not.

Nevertheless, I certainly learned a great deal from reading this, and would commend the book to those teaching human diseases and/or oral medicine. Of course it is always easy to criticise, but I just wonder how the target audience might react to the book, and I felt undergraduates may be less keen.

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