

BOOK REVIEWS

Clinical Skills in Medicine. 6th Edition 1989. Alan E. Reid Editor. Butterworth and Company (Publishers) Ltd. pp. 252. Price: £7.95 Sterling.

The first edition of this successful book was written in 1948 by Dr. John Naish, as "The Clinical Apprentice" – an introduction for students to the practical bedside techniques of history taking and physical examination. Professor Read, who co-authored the previous (fifth) edition with Dr. Naish, takes on the latest edition himself.

The book concentrates on general internal medicine, rather than surgery or paediatrics. It details a plan for the approach to history taking, indicating the particular characteristics of different symptoms, and their common causes. Physical examination techniques are described, supported by simple line drawing diagrams. Common abnormal findings are defined, and their causes listed.

There are special chapters on the particular problems encountered in dealing with the elderly and on examining a comatose patient. A useful section on investigations follows in two parts – firstly the ward side room tests which the student or doctor should be able to perform himself on blood, urine, or faeces, and secondly an explanation of the main investigations (laboratory and radiological) used in diagnosed disorders of the various body systems. Finally there is a brief chapter on how to write up the documentation of the history, physical examination and follow-up notes. Throughout the entire text is clearly permeated by an experienced clinician's hand.

The student who assimilates this short text in the early part of his bedside clinical training will be well prepared for clinical patient encounters and the assessment of abnormal clinical findings. It should be read in conjunction with a textbook of medicine, to provide the background details of various diseases which the student will meet.

As a concise, common sense book on the clinical encounter, it will be a big help to the student commencing his "clinical clerkship".

DAVID POWELL.

Shoulder Arthroscopy by Timothy D. Bunker and W. Angus Wallace. Published by Martin Dunitz Limited, 7-9 Pratt Street, London NW1 OAE. 1991. Price £45 Sterling.

Shoulder arthroscopy and arthroscopic surgery are areas of rapid development in orthopaedic surgery at the present time. These procedures, however, are technically demanding due to the complex anatomical structure of the shoulder joint and the diversity of pathology. This book approaches the subject in an organised manner from the good realistic indications discussed in the introduction and the well illustrated anatomy of the shoulder joint which allows an understanding of the various portals for the arthroscope and instrumentation. This chapter also gives a well illustrated scoring system for assessment of results which is so important in the advancement of new techniques. The section on imaging is comprehensive and includes magnetic resonance imaging. It appropriately mentions however its drawback after steroid injections as these can mimic rotator cuff tears. When embarking on such a difficult procedure the authors recommend a dedicated theatre suite

with the appropriate power, suturing and stapling instrumentation. This, however, may be impractical in many centres. Before abnormal findings are discussed, the chapter on the normal examination is well illustrated with line drawings pairing well with the arthroscopic photographs. However, when one considers this procedure is being performed for shoulder pathology, the chapter on abnormal findings was a little brief in context to the size of the book. The techniques of shoulder arthroscopy surgery, sub-acromial decompression and surgery for dislocation are useful now but are expected with the rapid advancement of techniques to be out of date relatively soon. The text is superbly presented and well illustrated for a subject that is most complex. It is highly recommended for all orthopaedic surgeons and trainees as a basic text, because it correctly and clearly spends much time on basic anatomy, correct surgical technique and basic procedures. The price is appropriate when one considers the high standard of illustrations, not only with line drawings, but the clear arthroscopic photographs.

MICHAEL M. STEPHENS.

A Colour Atlas of Childbirth and Obstetric Techniques by Farook al-Azzawi. Published by Wolfe Publishing Limited. pp. 142. Price £19.50.

This is a beautifully illustrated atlas describing ante natal care, birth and obstetric operations. The quality of photography is excellent and each illustration is accompanied by a brief, concise and easily identified text.

My initial reaction to this book was one of considerable suspicion; I felt a practical subject like obstetrics was unlikely to be learned by looking at diagrams or illustrations. In short I felt that the Doctor who had used this as his text book would instil a similar amount of confidence as the commercial airline pilot who had done a correspondence course in jumbo jet flying. However, familiarity with the book allayed most of my fears. It does not set out to be a complete and authoritative text book on obstetrics and due mainly to the modest aspirations and excellent illustrations this text book deserves a place in an under graduate library and possibly for a senior house officer in his formative years in obstetrics. The chapter on caesarean section I found interesting and the general excellence of photography is underlined by the photographic sequence accompanying the "En Caule" Caesarean Section.

One reservation about this book remains after reading it. Many of the photographs are of childbirth and the perineal area. No mention is given in the book or in the acknowledgements to the patients who co-operated in allowing themselves to be photographed and no explanation is given as to what sort of consent procedures were adopted prior to the photographs being taken. I appreciate that this is a minor point but any obstetric text book which is aimed at under graduates cannot over emphasize the sensitive and intimate nature of the subject.

I would feel that this is certainly a useful addition to the obstetric library and I use the word addition as I do not see it replacing any other book as it appears to be sui generis.

PETER McKENNA.