

## Book Reviews

**Andrew's Diseases of the Skin: Clinical Dermatology. Ninth edition.** By Richard B. Odom, William D. James, and Timothy G. Berger. 1135 pp, illustrated. Philadelphia, WB Saunders, 2000. \$115. ISBN 0-7216-5832-6.

Clinical dermatology continues to be one of the more challenging components of family practice. The patient comes into your office with a series of signs and symptoms culminating in a rash. Describing the rash as well as defining its cause is a perfect example of dealing with the undifferentiated complaint. *Diseases of the Skin* is a useful resource in helping family physicians face these situations.

This book contains 37 chapters on skin disorders, starting with basic structure and function, then covering processes of disease, such as connective tissue diseases, viral diseases, and malignancies. The focus of each chapter are the signs and symptoms and then treatment strategies. While the reading is quite dense, the information contained has sufficient depth to allow appropriate care of patients. Many of the most helpful chapters are organized around clinical features, etiology, histopathology, differential diagnosis, treatment, and prevention. Unfortunately, this structure is not uniform throughout the book.

This book would be especially helpful once you have a good idea of the diagnosis. It would be more useful for gaining greater depth of knowledge about particular diseases rather than as a quick reference in the heat of clinical care. Although there are more than 1,200 illustrations in this book, they are all in black and white and are not designed to assist in recognition or diagnosis. The illustrations help reinforce commentary in the text.

Overall, this book would be an excellent reference for family physicians, especially those with an emphasis on dermatologic disorders within their practice. It would also be useful for resident learning libraries.

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**Medical Disorders During Pregnancy. Third edition.** Edited by William M. Barron, Marshall D. Lindheimer, and John M. Davison. 648 pp, illustrated. St. Louis, Mosby, 2000. \$79. ISBN 0-323-00772-4.

This textbook is now in its third edition and brings together contributions from 31 authors. The editors maintain the same format that has been successful in previous editions. Each chapter provides a concise and practical discussion of disease based on up-to-date references and offers a number of tables, graphs, and algorithms to enhance the usability of its content. The 19 chapters in this edition are divided by organ system. In

addition, this edition includes resourceful chapters on drug abuse, psychiatric problems, critical care, the effect of embryonic and fetal exposure to x-rays, and guidelines for prescribing drugs to pregnant women. The editors have devoted separate, full chapters to hypertension and diabetes mellitus.

Each chapter is preceded by an outline giving the reader a quick view of the content of that chapter. The physiology of each organ system in normal gestation is followed with the clinical presentation, the diagnosis, and management of disease processes. Each chapter contains well-thought-out tables and algorithms that serve as quick reference guides for the busy physician. Useful illustrations are included where necessary, and there are several color plates of common dermatologic rashes and Doppler flow studies. In addition, a reference section that is current and well researched follows every chapter. The index is reliable, well planned, and user friendly. This edition has added a new appendix that includes 48 graphs that depict frequently sought biochemical tests measured serially throughout normal gestation, which some readers might find interesting.

The editors state that the "major aims of the text are to enhance the ability of the general internist and medical subspecialist to (1) render more effective consultation when called on to see a pregnant patient with a medical disorder, and (2) provide appropriate pregnancy management and counseling for women of childbearing age who have a chronic medical disease." I have to agree that this text does indeed meet these goals; however, family physicians who practice obstetrics will find this textbook just as helpful in caring for their obstetric patients.

Overall, I believe that this textbook is by far one of the best references written regarding medical disorders that can occur during pregnancy. The writing is clear and to the point, and it provides practical information that providers can implement into practice. This text would make a wonderful addition to any bookshelf and complement any general obstetric text that a physician might already possess.

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**A Clinical Atlas of 101 Common Skin Diseases with Histopathologic Correlation.** By A. Bernard Ackerman, Helmut Kerl, Jorge Sanchez, Ying Guo, Angelika Hofer, Paul Kelly, Tetsu Kimura, Giovanni Borroni, Charles Crutcheifield, Volker Steinkraus, and Wolfgang Weyers. 662 pp, illustrated. New York, Ardor Scribendi, 2000. \$125 (paper). ISBN 1-8933357-10-4.

The intended audience for this dermatology atlas is wide-ranging—from medical students to seasoned dermatologists and pathologists. The book has much to

recommend it. The photographs are numerous and of high quality. The text is clearly organized into chapters arranged alphabetically by disease name. Each chapter in turn has a uniform organization: a terse definition followed by a photograph showing the typical clinical features, photomicrographs at low and high magnification, more photographs showing different attributes of the lesions, a statement about the course of the disease, a section titled "Integration: Unifying Concept," and last, therapy. The authors made a point of including photographs of patients of a variety of races. I enjoyed the photograph of two of the authors showing common baldness.

The photographs are the only part of the book that family physicians will potentially find useful; however, many of the photographs seem redundant, and the photomicrographs were of no value to me. The Course of the Disease and Integration: Unifying Concept sections are described on a molecular level using many unfamiliar terms. The therapy sections typically contain just a few general recommendations. For example, the chapter on acne vulgaris contains 63 photographs but only three sentences about therapy. Some terms unfamiliar to me in this chapter were *conglobate* and *anetoderma*.

The authors describe this atlas as light in weight (but weighty in substance) and easy to fit into a wide pocket. But at 2.5 pounds and 5.5 inches wide, this book would tear off any pocket it could fit into.

Most family physicians are likely to prefer a dermatology text that includes much more information about treatment, though fewer photographs. This atlas will appeal primarily to physicians who specifically want more photographs of skin diseases and who are willing to pay the inevitable high price of such a book.

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**20 Common Problems in Preventive Health Care.** Edited by Douglas Campos-Outcalt; Barry Weiss, series editor. 510 pp, illustrated. New York, McGraw-Hill, 2000. \$39.95 (paper). ISBN 0-07-012044-7.

This text provides a thorough discussion of common preventable problems encountered in the primary care setting. Seven chapters relate to the care of infants and children (immunizations, vision problems, hearing problems, dental decay, iron-deficiency anemia, lead poisoning, newborn metabolic screening), two chapters to the care of adolescents and young adults (sexually transmitted diseases, prenatal care), and the remaining 11 chapters to the care of adults (smoking prevention and cessation; alcohol and drug abuse; cancer of the cervix, breast, prostate, colon; cardiovascular disease; diabetes; osteoporosis; adult vaccinations; and the traveler). There is good uniformity in the organization of each chapter. The writing is clear and concise and the tables are relevant and well prepared.

The authors have relied heavily on recommendations from the US Preventive Services Task Force, the Canadian Task Force on the Periodic Health Examination,

and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. All three are reputable sources for preventive health guidelines.

Each chapter provides a relevant, thorough discussion of the topic being addressed. The authors use a uniform approach when examining each of the clinical issues presented in the text. Most chapters contain an introduction; a discussion about the natural history and epidemiology of the problem; primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention approaches; recommendations to clinicians, errors to avoid; and emerging trends.

The 1998 book entitled *Clinician's Handbook of Preventive Services, 2nd Edition*, prepared by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion of the US Department of Health and Human Services (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1998), has information on about 15 of the 20 topics covered in *20 Common Problems*. The primary difference between these two texts is that the 62 chapters in the *Clinician's Handbook* are briefer and provide an overview rather than an in-depth examination of each subject area.

I have two concerns that detracted somewhat from *20 Common Problems*. Each chapter refers to studies that support the recommendations made by the authors. Unfortunately, not all studies are cited in the list of references at the end of each chapter, and the references that are included are not consistently linked to the text. In addition, each chapter begins with a table of contents for the subsections within the chapter. The subsections, however, are not accompanied by page numbers, so the reader has to leaf through each chapter when seeking specific information about the topics addressed in the chapter.

These concerns aside, this text is useful. It will serve as a valuable source of prevention information for medical students, residents, and clinicians who seek to acquire an in-depth understanding of 20 highly relevant topics.

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**Conn's Current Therapy 2000.** Edited by Robert E. Rakel. 1284 pp, illustrated. Philadelphia, W B Saunders, 2000. \$59. ISBN 0-7216-7225-6.

As an off-the-shelf quick reference, *Conn's Current Therapy* has for years been a dependable and predictable resource. Dr. Rakel does a nice job, as usual, of assembling a mostly new group of authors each year to write the disease-focused chapters. The book is sort of like a McDonald's restaurant—you know what the product's quality will be like and without any unpleasant surprises. In a practice setting, when you need a quick education on a particular subject with a little more in-depth information for patient management, the authors pull together the information in a fashion that can be comprehended in a 5- to 10-minute reading. The reference is also appropriate for medical student and resident education. Each article ranges from two to six pages and includes an abbreviated diagnostic review followed by more-compre-