

## Book reviews

### ASSESSMENT OF HEARING DISABILITY GUIDELINES FOR MEDICO/LEGAL PRACTICE

P. F. King, R. R. A. Cole, M. E. Lutman  
and D. W. Robinson.

Whurr Publishers Ltd: London. 1992.

ISBN 1 870332 040. Price: £14.95.

Although it is the natural successor of the booklet of the same name published in 1983 and recommended by the British Association of Otolaryngology and British Society of Audiology, the so called 'Blue Book', this is an entirely different animal. Less restrained authors would have entitled it 'Everything you need to know about Noise Induced Deafness'. Packed into the hundred pages of the 'Black Book', as it has already been called by Judge Lachs, there is advice about every aspect of the assessment of hearing disability and what should be included in a Medico/Legal Report. Topics range from the calibration of audiometers to the procedure for testing bone conduction, sources of error in audiometry to detection of spurious hearing thresholds (SHTL), mandatory requirements for the evaluation of attributable hearing loss to apportioning disability between employers. The book is the product of an Inter-Society Working Group representing the British Society of Otolaryngology, British Society of Audiology, British Association of Audiological Physicians and British Association of Audiological Scientists set up in 1985 which has met twenty-five times to distil the painstaking study of the worlds literature and other relevant material for which individual authors have taken special responsibility. Professor Hinchcliffe attended all the meetings but at the eleventh hour decided that he did not wish his name to be included in the authorship.

The many Otologists who are likely to be involved in preparing reports in cases of suspected noise induced deafness until the end of the millennium when it is estimated that new cases will be reduced to a trickle will be glad of an authoritative reference book to support their expert evidence. They will also find eleven pages of glossary as well as two pages of abbreviations to help them interpret the ever growing terminology. There are tables to determine hearing thresholds and disability attributable to age associated hearing loss in men and women, the expected effect of continuous sound pressure levels in the average man and percentage disability as a function of the hearing in the better ear. The arguments for using 1, 2 and 3 kHz rather than 1, 2 and 4 kHz as a 'surrogate' for measuring disability are set out. According to my dictionary a surrogate means deputizing, particularly in relation to Bishops in the practice of confirmation and the use of this word may help the 'Black Book' to become the Bible of noise induced deafness but I would have found it easier to understand if it had been said that the loss at these frequencies

should be the starting point or basis for estimating disability. The book recommends at Lutman's suggestion that the sum of the losses 1, 2 and 3 kHz rather than the average should be used in calculations and this would certainly help to avoid using awkward fractions. The book is already in great demand and you should not be surprised if you have to wait for your copy whilst the publishers are reprinting. Perhaps future editions could have an index.

Charles Smith.

### A NEW SHORT TEXTBOOK OF OTOLARYNGOLOGY

M. S. McCormick, W. J. Primrose and  
I. J. MacKenzie. Edward Arnold: London. 1992.  
ISBN 0 340 39802 7. Price £14.99.

The new edition of this short text book for medical students appears 18 years after the last edition and has been completely rewritten by its three new authors. The book is (inevitably at this price) a paperback and is well presented with a clear print and sufficient diagrams, black and white photographs and tables to avoid its looking too daunting for its intended readership. The prose is generally concise, simple and, I found, easily digested.

The book is divided into four sections: the ear, the nose and sinuses, the mouth and salivary glands, and the throat. Each section starts conventionally with a commendably brief but quite adequate account of the embryology, surgical anatomy and physiology of its subject but thereafter the authors have eschewed the traditional manner of the general textbook and have employed a 'symptomatic' approach. So, for instance, the ear is covered in chapters headed 'earache', 'deafness', 'vertigo' etc. This system generally works well and should appeal to its intended readership but carries the significant disadvantage of repetition. This seemed particularly so in the otology section where most of the conditions covered present with several of the symptoms used for chapter headings, hence malignant otitis externa is described in three separate chapters—something of a luxury in a 'short textbook'! In fairness, the authors have clearly anticipated this problem and deal with it very adequately in most cases by cross references, lists and a comprehensive index.

Less excusable was the repetition of minor details: the relevance of cotton buds in otitis externa is probably worth a mention but not five times! Equally irritating was the unacceptably high incidence of misprints some of which occurred in paragraph headings and diagrams. Taken together, this suggests that the proof reading might have been better.

The book sets out to cover all aspects of ENT to final MBChB level and I believe it does this with something to spare. However some important areas were thinly covered: