

Book Reviews

CLINICAL HANDBOOK OF EAR, NOSE AND THROAT DISORDERS

W. R. Wilson, J. B. Nadol and G. W. Randolph
Parthenon Publishing, New York, 2002.
ISBN 1-85070-605-0 US\$49.46

and

A SLIDE ATLAS OF EAR, NOSE AND THROAT DISORDERS ON CD-ROM

A J Gulya and W R Wilson
Parthenon Publishing, New York, 2001.
ISBN 1-84214-109-0 US\$80.96

This pair of products, a textbook and a slide-bearing CD, holds much promise in their titles. It is however difficult to say that this promise is fulfilled by the mediocre quality of the finished products.

The textbook is not quite 'handbook' size being almost double that of the BNF. The authors recommend the book to medical students, primary care physicians and junior ER trainees. While I agree that it is not suitable for specialist trainees or their senior colleagues, I also find it hard to recommend this to the authors' proposed target audience. It is just too bland. The text is in solid blocks, punctuated only by occasional line diagrams and very sparse summary tables. The radiology chapter has some reasonable pictures. Interestingly each chapter starts with a list of all the topics therein, but no page references; hence, when searching for a topic, one has to always check the index at the back. Bibliographies are very limited.

The book has the feel of someone sitting down one day with a Dictaphone and just recounting their own thoughts on a topic; this is reflected in the frequent use of terms such as: 'most often'; 'usually'; 'not infrequent'; 'commonly'. This lacks the precision that many readers seek when assessing the impact of a disease process.

One might anticipate urgent referral to such a text in an emergency setting (it is meant to be a handbook). However the example of airway management is a disappointing example, with one limited algorithm surrounded by several pages of solid text for you to browse through!

At a more basic level, the section on tonsillitis includes in the first paragraph too much emphasis, in my opinion, on acute rheumatic fever and glomerulonephritis and seems to advocate 'prompt antibiotic treatment' of the tonsillitis; a recommendation not borne out by recent systemic reviews.

Overall one does not get a good impression of this book from the minute you flick through the pages and for approximately US\$49.46 I think there are other, superior, books available.

If the textbook is somewhat disappointing, the CD-ROM is I am afraid no better. The quality of many of the 117 images is frankly poor. Some images appear to have been scanned from hard copies of photographs, while others are taken with poor focus and light. One might hope to use these images for teaching, but I counted 25 images that I did not feel were of sufficient quality for the job. A minor point perhaps, but I do not expect pictures of several audiograms in an atlas which should be largely clinical pictures. (I can draw an audiogram to demonstrate a point if necessary). Many of the slides of middle-ear pathology are quite amateurish in their quality (apologies to amateur photographers) and are often out of focus. The nasal images are variable in quality and there is a disappointing lack of neck lump photos. The laryngeal photos are almost all 'fuzzy'.

This CD costs approximately US\$80.96 and my advice would be to save a bit more and buy your own digital camera.

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