

HANDBOOK OF OTOLARYNGOLOGY; HEAD AND NECK SURGERY, 2nd edn

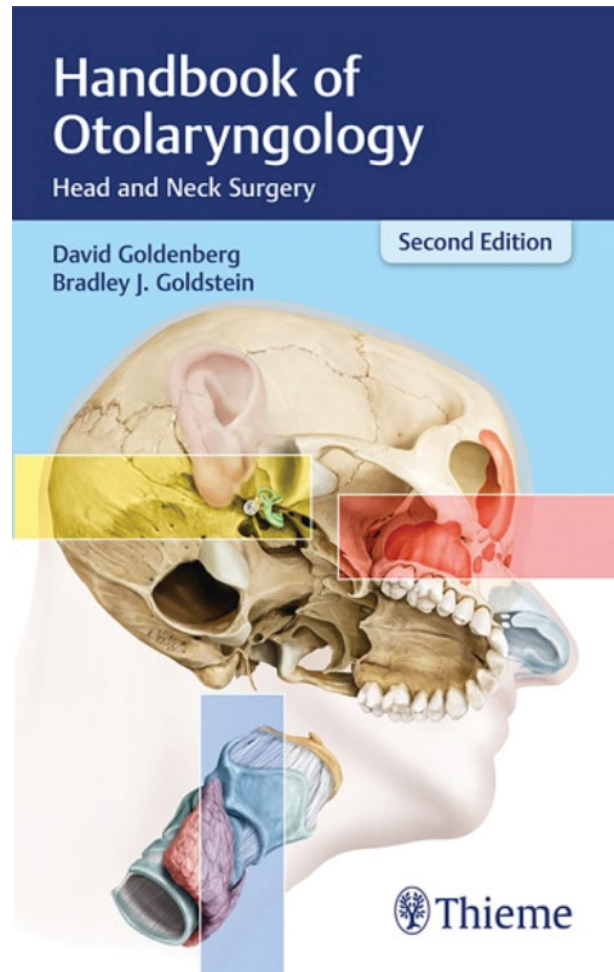
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The costs remind me of the exchange rate and the declining value of Sterling, while the imminent break with our Continental cousins makes me grateful for my Irish passport. So, while the pound in your pocket has any value, you might consider your need for what is yet another handbook. The first edition appeared in 2010 and the years have seen an increase in price of only €5, which seems not unreasonable. The first edition was described as a pocket book, which could be accommodated in a long white laboratory coat, but it would certainly have resulted in a very asymmetric appearance of the wearer or a nasty scoliosis. This second edition is, we are told, award winning and ‘the GOLD standard amongst pocket guides for this specialty’. The immediate impression here is indeed of a book that is simply packed with text, but well presented. Sometimes structure can dominate and distract if overdone, but not here. The layout uses subtle bullet points, key text in highlighted boxes and clear headings. The result is a book one can actually read, rather than just dip into; the latter all too common a feature of handbooks.

The second edition retains the paperback format and the cover is very similar. Indeed, the main change is that the image has been flipped through 180 degrees. Despite the many contributors, the multi-author chapters show a nice uniformity of style. There is new coverage of endocrine surgery and improved colour illustrations that are commendable for a ‘handbook’. I particularly liked the histology slides and the excellently rendered basic anatomy pictures. There are useful appendices added, including a series of anatomy diagrams and a fast reference to any content that covers emergencies, ideal for the novice reader. I was less convinced by the attempt to briefly describe a small series of procedures. Tracheostomy and cricothyrotomy worked fine, but I am not sure that rigid endoscopies or adenotonsillectomy benefitted much from this approach. The opening chapter gladdened my heart by simply explaining how to take a patient’s history and carry out a clinical examination, rather than just shouting out a list of abbreviations for laboratory tests, followed by ‘Stat’. Such might work for one handsome actor in the television show ‘ER’, but it is good to see that basic clinical skills are still encouraged by these authors.

I was sure there was no reproduction of imaging whatsoever, but did find two scans eventually, in



the thyroid section. This did not bother me at all. We have many an atlas to refer to, and personal supervised experience is the best learning tool for expertise in imaging interpretation. This book is very well updated (with tumour–node–metastasis staging systems labelled as 2017) and comprehensive, ranging from neurolaryngology to facio-plastics. I was amused to note online reviews of the first edition criticising the coverage of aesthetic surgery as superficial, however good the rest of the content, with both of these reviews published in plastic surgery journals! That is not what handbooks are for and, in places, there is quite an advanced depth of knowledge.

I think this is indeed the most readable of the many handbooks recently seen in our specialty. It is an ideal introduction to any topic in our field and should encourage the trainee to read further. A pocket book maybe not, but an excellent handbook nevertheless.

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