Book Reviews

Paul K. Buxton
ABC of Dermatology; 2nd ed.
A second edition of P.K. Buxton’s ABC of Dermatology has now been published. This book was originally based on the collection of articles written for the British Medical Journal in 1987. It is well illustrated in colour, and the information is nicely presented in an easily digestible way for the beginner in dermatology. The 1st edition found a niche in the already crowded market for introductory dermatology books, and the 2nd edition will now take its place. There is an excellent introduction to the descriptive language of dermatology, and the chapters are well ordered and concise. There is a new chapter on HIV and AIDS.
My only criticism relates to the size of some of the illustrations; a few larger pictures of certain conditions would be helpful. A few illustrations are repeated, such as herpes zoster photos on pages 34 and 48, and some are unconvincing like the nail thickening photo on page 66.
On a matter of priority I would like to see leg ulcer oedema management discuss compression stockings before diuretics.
Overall I think this is a good starting point for those exposed to dermatology for the first time and for junior House Officers and General Practitioners. There are many similar books available but this one has already proven its appeal. Ultimately each person has to look at a number of books before finding the one most suitable for them, and I would recommend people include this book among those they peruse before buying.
R.P.R. Dawber, Oxford

K. Zürcher, A. Krebs
Cutaneous Drug Reactions
An Integral Synopsis of Today’s Systemic Drugs
Karger, Basel 1992
VIII+ 570 pp.; SFr. 496.-, DM 594.-, $ 397.00
ISBN 3-8055-4939-3
In daily medical practice, most patients are treated with drugs. Physicians may be confronted with signs and symptoms which could be complications of the treatment rather than part of the disease. If one admits that the risks of today’s powerful pharmacotherapy cannot be completely avoided, one is also obliged to recognize them early and to reduce or eliminate noxious medical effects. They are to be expected in about 1 per 40-50 patients. This is the consequence of today’s immense drug armament with its innumerable possibilities of undesired reactions. Drug-induced skin changes may be recognized from personal experience, but the attribution to a specific drug derives only from the collective experience of published evidence. In order to arrive at rational decisions, one must have optimal information sources. This book offers thorough and updated (data collected until mid 1991) information on skin-related drug complications in a synoptic presentation. The two main parts consist of drug tables and sign symptom tables, substantiated in a large bibliography.
The main parts are presented in tabulai form to allow quick location of needed data. The indexes permit the user to trace either the side effects of specific drugs and their frequency or the possible drug causes of cutaneous reactions. The drug index contains both generic and brand names. The introductory part considers special aspects such as the problem of ‘adverse drug reactions’, the patient, the drug, the doctor, cutaneous drug reaction: and their monitoring, and the methods of the enormous review. This wealth of information and its clear organization make this survey of cutaneous drug reactions an indispensable reference source for any physician prescribing drugs.

Christian Surber, Base
Charles Calnan
The Life and Times of Geoffrey Barrow Dowling

It was a pleasure to review the book by Charles Calnan on Geoffrey Dowling. Printed in 1993, it consists of 19 chapters, a preface, list of 16 plates and an index. The volume comprises some 280-odd pages, and there is probably no other person around in British dermatology but Charles Calnan, who could have written such a meticulous compilation of Geoffrey Dowling’s life and work and render it so lovingly (chapter 2 was written by George Findlay).

The book extensively covers the family relation, the family background of Dr. Dowling and his many activities through more than a century. Inextricably interwoven with the history of British dermatology, the volume is at the same time a history of British dermatology and of the George Club, which was later to become the Dowling Club. To any researcher of the history of dermatology, it is an invaluable source of information of what was going on in the first three quarters of this century in dermatology in Britain, and for this reason, it should be on the shelves of all the major dermatology departments of the continent.

Admittedly, many minute details are recorded or alluded to, but this is what makes history colourful and this is what researchers look for but all too often cannot find.

In the last chapter on immortality, Charles Calnan elaborates a tie on the concept of immortality in religious belief, in a philosophic aristocratic sense and then in what he calls social immortality. At this point he quotes John Donne (1572-1631). The reviewer, who had the rare privilege to be once introduced to Dr. Geoffrey Dowling, is honorary member of the club and who incidentally also comes from family of musicians, should like to close with another line of John Donne’s poetry entitled ‘His Picture’: ‘Thine in my heart where my soul dwells, shall dwell.’

Karl Holubar, Vienna

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