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Book Review

Fletcher CDM, editor: *Diagnostic Histopathology of Tumors, Second Edition, 1850 pp, London, Churchill Livingstone, 2000 (\$350.00).*

The first edition of this book was unfortunately not reviewed in *Modern Pathology*, and all that this Book Review Editor can provide are a few flimsy excuses. In the meanwhile, even without our endorsement, the book turned out to be an unqualified success, receiving worldwide praise and awards. It apparently did well financially, since the second edition appeared only 4 years after the first one.

Because reviewing a book of this size could consume considerable time, I decided to 'cheat' a bit and asked my residents which one of the four major surgical pathology books they would recommend the most to their peers. Almost unanimously their answer was that for learning surgical pathology they would recommend *Rosai* and for day-to-day consultations they would use *Fletcher*. The results of this unscientific poll are good news for Harcourt (the publisher of both books), but unfortunately my residents were not articulate enough in explaining their choices, or in providing me with the exact words that I could use in this write-up. Thus, I schlepped home the two heavy volumes of *Fletcher* and perused them while hiding from my grandchildren. I enjoyed reading parts of it, and what's even more important, I was most favorably impressed.

I am not sure that I will be much better than my residents at telling you why I liked the book, but I will try my best. First of all, it is physically beautiful and one feels a tactile pleasure leafing through it. The layout of the text and the color photographs is truly pleasing. Second, even though it is a multiauthored book it reads like work of a single writer. Either Dr. Fletcher edited the text extensively himself, or he was aided by a compulsive copy editor, or he persuaded the contributors to conform and follow his instructions on how to deal with each subject. In any case, almost all chapters are structured rather uniformly, reflecting the analytical diagnostic approach favored by the editor. Third, the authors do not mince words. This is what we know about this and that entity; here are our arguments for calling it this and that; and here is our approach on how to diagnose it next time you see it.

Reading the text, one has the impression that all

the unnecessary chaff has been left out and that the book deals with the essential core only. Anybody who has ever tried to write a brief textbook or chapter knows that it is much easier to be logorrheic than terse! Surgical pathologists, by temperament or the nature of their job, like texts written such a way, and I predict that they will appreciate the effort of these writers to be concise. The text is amplified by well-chosen photomicrographs, shot just at the right magnification. There are many of them, and almost all of them are technically flawless.

Dr. Fletcher has assembled a stellar team of contributors, and they have produced a remarkable text. My critical comments pertain more to style than anything of substance. For example, I like good tables and I would have liked more tables. For example, there are some tables that compare the diagnostic aspects of closely related tumors—I would have liked more of those. On the other hand, I did not see the point of including some extremely long tables; some of these 'all inclusive' tables had to be printed in barely legible letters to fit onto the page! I also should mention the lists of references that could be shortened in the next edition; 23 pages of references at the end of the lymphoma chapter is too much even for 'lymphomaniacs,' not to mention us regular mortals. Finally, I know that certain pathologists are 'irreplaceable' and that a major book of this kind would be 'unimaginable' without their contribution, but having them write on the same topic in more than one 'major' textbook may give the readers a sense of *déjà vu*. But, of course, I might be wrong.

Having fulfilled my function of the critic, let me end this review on a positive note and an unequivocal endorsement of this magisterial opus. It is destined to become the standard by which all other books of this kind are measured. I predict that it will be enthusiastically received by most juniors and many seniors (I did not dare to use the word 'most,' as you can imagine!) in our ranks. I recommend it most enthusiastically in its critically revised and updated second edition.

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