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Book Review

Robboy SL, Anderson MC, Russell P: Pathology of the Female Reproductive Tract, 929 pp, London, Churchill Livingstone, 2002 (\$250.00).

'When in the course of human events it becomes necessary' (with an apology to Thomas Jefferson) to come up with a major new textbook of gynecologic pathology, the most important prerequisite is the confluence of minds: that of a first-class publisher experienced in such matters, and that of team of enthusiastic authors/editors willing to see to it that the project is completed in due time. Preferably, the putative editors should have a respectable track record. In the present case it helped that all three editors have written extensively on gynecologic pathology, and it definitely does not hurt that they have authored chapters for books that could now be considered as a competition of their own. For the record I should mention that many years ago I reviewed Dr. Russell's book on the pathology of the ovaries, which is now in part incorporated in the present book; I still think that it is one of best books of ovarian pathology ever written.

This voluminous book is a physically beautiful piece of art reflecting the know-how of both the British publisher and the transcontinental team of editors and contributors. In contrast to other major textbooks of gynecologic pathology, its illustrations are almost all in color and, all other things being equal, that is an enormous advantage—pathology is still in effect a visual discipline. The editors deserve compliments for assembling such a cornucopia of gross and microscopic figures, and the publishers are to be congratulated for rendering them in print so brilliantly.

The beauty of the illustrations should, however, not detract one from the well-written and

masterfully edited text. By all standards it is comprehensive, informative, and replete with useful data and diagnostic hints. In contrast to the verbosity of some other texts, this one is rather lapidary. For my part, I find it not only more desirable but also more admirable—concise writing requires more effort than semiautomatic dictation of whatever comes to one's mind. The present text strikes the right balance between being comprehensive and being to the point. It is just right for a busy pathologist swamped in his or her daily practice with tons of surgical material. A structured and systematic approach to each entity, applied throughout the book, will make it also attractive to novices who may decide to read it cover to cover over a period of several months or even years. The tables dealing with the differential diagnosis of closely related or morphologically similar entities are a feature worth mentioning, and one regrets only that the book does not contain more of them. Tabular presentations of immunophenotypes of various tumors are yet another notable attraction. The references are well chosen and up to date.

The review copy of this book reached me 6 months after it appeared in print. One of the possible reasons, as I learned from talking with Dr. Robboy, is that the demand exceeded the initial supply, surpassing the publisher's expectations. From what I know about medical publishing, I would predict that the demand will remain strong, and I predict that many more copies of this wonderful book will be sold over the next few years all over the world.

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