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Oral cancer

J. P. Shah, N. W. Johnson, J. G. Batsakis
London: Martin Dunitz, 2002
price: £149.95, pp504
ISBN 189906687X

With three distinguished and authoritative workers in the field of oral cancer, this promised to be a work of some merit. The editors have had a significant input to most of the chapters. Until this book, the most comprehensive text covering the subject was the text of the late Ian McGregor. The editors claim this to be a 'complete compendium for the multidisciplinary management of oral cancer', and it most certainly is.

Sensibly divided into three sections, the first covers pathology and biology of oral cancer in the broadest sense including a brief overview of tumours other than squamous carcinoma. A valiant effort has been made by condensing the molecular biology into one concise chapter; given the copious volume of research appearing daily this is the one chapter that is likely to become dated.

The clinical management is covered in the second section. The surgical pictures are impeccable, and clearly illustrate the techniques described. There is a clear concise chapter on radiotherapy which is interpretable for the non-oncologist. Additionally, a logically presented chapter on the important area of palliative care management completes this section.

The third section covers outcomes and follow-up. Both intraoral and extraoral prosthetic restoration and rehabilitation are covered in a long chapter. The final chapter deals with prevention of oral cancer.

This is by far the most authoritative monograph to date covering the subject of oral cancer. It is illustrated in colour throughout and extensively referenced. This book will serve as a valuable reference work but should be read by all workers in the field of oral cancer regardless of specialty or seniority.

R. Oliver

Critical decisions in periodontology

W. B. Hall
London: BC Decker Inc., 2003
price: USD 99.95, pp324
ISBN 1550091840

This book is about problem solving and choice. Each of the 153 two-page chapters consists of a decision flow chart and explanatory text. The first eight parts (74 chapters) are about examination, diagnosis and treatment planning, while the remaining six parts expand several aspects of treatment. A few decision charts are banal and best replaced by words, such as those on digital radiographs, overhanging margins and prophylaxis versus root planing.

The problem with any book of this type is that individual reviewers will easily find things they disagree with, because it tries to teach black-and-white decision-making. Although there is considerable periodontal evidence, many areas are not clear-cut, and numerous decisions are a matter of opinion or preference. I tried to put my preferences behind me, reading the book to see whether it interpreted evidence accurately, whether it gave good guidance on decision-making, and whom I would advise to read it.

Interpretation is sometimes unsatisfactory. For instance in chapter five, on microbial tests, the contributors assume the truth of the specific plaque hypothesis. Even today, the evidence is far from conclusive. The habitat may determine the microbiota, instead of specific microbes determining disease. And even if the latter is true, we still know only half the microbes which are present, so it is grossly premature to recommend microbial testing.

Guidance on decision-making lacks an overall philosophy. Too little emphasis is given to the most tested forms of treatment, including oral hygiene and root planing, and some promising recent developments such as

enamel matrix derivatives are mentioned too briefly. I would have liked more about the separate responsibilities of patient and operator, and a patient-orientated emphasis: tooth retention and good aesthetics frequently may be achieved with simple treatment.

Some of the illustrations and proof-reading could have been better. The caption to one figure describes deep vertical bone defects, but we are shown a monochrome picture of apparently normal gingival tissues. The captions to another two figures are the same, referring to distal furcation involvement, but the latter figure is of mucogingival surgery.

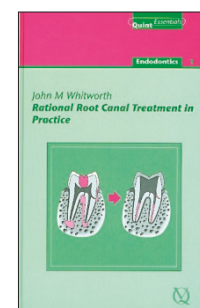
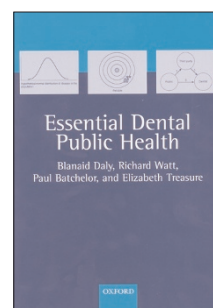
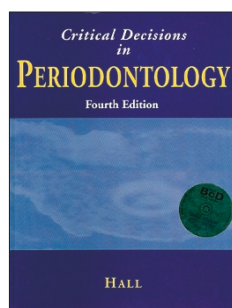
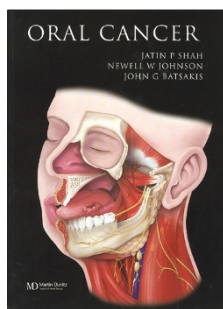
Overall, the book seems hampered by its approach. The flow charts are not always the help they are intended to be. The book is unlikely to help undergraduates, who may be confused by the uneven emphasis on different subjects, but I would recommend it to postgraduates who are taught to be critical and will be more familiar with the literature. It is always interesting to read views which differ from your own, because it helps you to re-examine your own beliefs again and test their truth.

T. Watts

Essential dental public health

B. Daly, R. Watt, P. Batchelor, E. Treasure
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002
price: £24.95, pp372
ISBN 0192629743

This book is aimed primarily at dental undergraduates based in the UK. In recognition that dental public health is a recognized core subject in most undergraduate dental curricula, this book aims to provide the 'busy dental undergraduate' with information on the key elements of dental public health which will be covered in their undergraduate course. First impressions



are that the layout of the book, with many diagrams and boxes containing key points, makes it interesting and easy to read. At the beginning of each chapter there is a list of learning objectives that will be covered within the chapter. This is particularly helpful, since the main motivation of most undergraduates using the book will be 'what am I expected to know and understand in this area?'

Whilst dental public health can be viewed as a mainly postgraduate subject, the challenge in providing a textbook for undergraduates in this subject, is to make the subject meaningful and useful for a group, the majority of whom will spend their working lives as primary dental care practitioners. The authors see dental public health as a way of developing the students' analytical skills, with an end product of a practitioner who has a wider ethical perspective on his role in providing care within a community and a questioning approach to the delivery of care. This influences the book in that there are many discussion points presented within the book that are designed to stimulate debate and discussion. However, several of these questions are very broad, often imponderable questions, which would be difficult for the average undergraduate to consider without the stimulation and help of fellow students or a teacher. Although the book does not contain any answers to these discussion points, key issues raised are to be posted on the Oxford University Press website. It does however mean that the book is not a stand-alone text for undergraduates who do not have access to the internet. It may be that the discussion points are also intended as material for use in small group teaching of undergraduates in the dental school, which would be a good way getting the most benefit from the book.

Several of the authors are from London dental schools and there is a resultant significant emphasis on a whole-population approach to public health. Whilst much can be said in support of this approach, the book does not provide a very balanced view, and there is the potential that readers will feel that the role of dental practitioners is of little significance in terms of addressing dental public health needs, which is paradoxical since the majority of readers will, in all probability, end up as primary dental care practitioners.

R. Harris

Rational root canal treatment in practice

J. M. Whitworth

London: Quintessence Publishing Co. Ltd, 2002

price: £28.00, pp134

ISBN 1850970556

This handy sized book of 134 pages is the second volume in the *Quintessentials for General Dental Practitioner Series*. The aim is to give a reasonably comprehensive overview of most aspects of dental practice. Hard-pressed practitioners should find this is a very welcome innovation, as many standard textbooks have tended to become almost biblical in length and often difficult to digest. A striking feature of this edition is John Whitworth's informal style of writing, which makes for comfortable reading.

Each chapter is prefaced with a brief outline of the aims and outcome. The sequence of chapters follows a logical progression beginning with a discussion on the fundamentals of endodontic disease. Clearly, in a book of this length detailed discussion of every aspect is impossible; nevertheless, all salient

points are succinctly put. There follows a chapter with an interesting heading of 'Endodontic symptomology and immediate management', which seems to be another way of saying management of endodontic emergencies. This is an interesting chapter and although the explanations and opinions expressed are valid, not everyone perhaps will quite agree with some of the management aspects.

Chapter 3, entitled 'Preparing for definitive treatment', has an excellent section on rubber dam usage, which should persuade all doubters of the merits of using this remarkably simple but invaluable aid. The following chapters discuss various aspects of root canal treatment procedures with detailed descriptions of most preparation and filling protocols. The quality of illustration is of a high standard although again one or two issues will invite some debate: an inevitable by-product of an evolving practical science. The final chapter examines some of the factors that govern success and failure, and brings home the realisation that endodontic treatment is a peculiarly demanding skill as far as technique is concerned, and that on occasion small details can sometimes be so critical to the success or otherwise of treatment.

Dr Whitworth has produced a stimulating, characterful, considered text on endodontic treatment, which should inspire its readers to greater heights of achievement and understanding of this enigmatic art. There are omissions, notably endodontic surgery; nevertheless, this is a very handy text to keep in the surgery for dipping into when anxiety levels rise because something is not going quite right.

C. Nehammer