En route towards genetic medicine in practice: a clinical genetics guide in the post genomic era

New Clinical Genetics

Andrew Read and Dian Donnai (eds)
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The 'New Clinical Genetics' is the result of a longstanding and fruitful collaboration between a clinical geneticist (Dian Donnai) and a molecular geneticist (Andrew Read), two outstanding 'figures' in their respective fields in human genetics. The book (Figure 1) intends to provide clinicians, genetic counsellors, and pre- and postgraduate students in genetics, whose starting points are patients and family histories, with practical approaches to face clinical issues. The clear intention of the authors is to be didactic and produce a book adapted to the courses of clinical genetics training in most developed countries, which will make learning appealing by focussing on '*in vivo*' clinical situations. Doing so, as they explained in the 'How to use this book' section, Read and Donnai offer a very handy tool for both case-based teaching and a more traditional approach of genetic medicine and genetic science. It is indeed striking to see how productive has been the Department of Medical Genetics at Saint Mary's Hospital in teaching and pedagogic resources in Manchester University for many years, in keeping with the excellence of the British Medical Genetics school and its particular interest and skills in education. Along with this tradition, this book is a very valuable tool that will be used by future geneticists all over Europe and beyond, both as a teaching material and as a source of excellent knowledge.

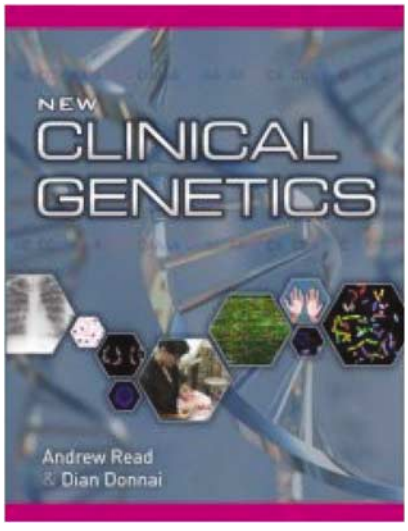

Figure 1

Each chapter of the book addresses specific questions that students may have about a clinical genetics situation, as well as the related scientific developments. All chapters are organized in the same way, starting with *learning points* (summary of what the chapter should enable the student to achieve), followed by *case studies,* a section that introduces a series of brief clinical descriptions, *backgrounds* with explanation of concepts and methods necessary to understand a particular section, *investigation of patients*, and a *summary*. Each of the 14 chapters addresses a broad issue such as 'What can we learn from a family history?', 'How do genes work?', 'How can a patient's DNA be studied?', 'What do mutations do?', 'What is epigenetics?', 'Is cancer genetic?', or 'What can we do about genetic disease?'. The chapters are very well set, avoiding redundancies and covering most of what clinical genetics can provide to genetic medicine as it now stands. At the beginning of the book, abbreviations as well as the 26 case reports and their page references are listed. The chapters are followed by a very useful guide containing self-assessment questions related to each of the 14 chapters, as well as a glossary and an index. With this original setting, students and faculties may choose various routes throughout the material provided.

Overall, the 'New Clinical Genetics' is typical of an original teaching model, which could provide, in particular, the principle of double entry, combining theoretical models with clinical practice outcome. Because the authors' viewpoint is to first address the students' questions, the book will obviously be of great help to professors. One of the possible drawbacks of such an original organisation is that, at first glance, the book is more appropriate for a linear and step-by-step reading rather than for rapidly seeking data; however, the comprehensive index allows one to directly pick particular information in the book when required. The diagnostic procedures on patients and deep thoughts about apparently simple problems are the baselines of this excellent book, for which one can predict a great future as a companion of the bestseller 'Human Molecular Genetics' (Read and Strachan, Garland Science)■

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