

## Book Review

**Guido Massi and Philip LeBoit: *Histologic Diagnosis of Nevi and Melanoma*, 657 pp, Springer-Verlag, New York, 2004 (\$150).**

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The distinction of melanoma from nevus is a daily exercise for the majority of pathologists. It is one that is becoming increasingly challenging. A recent study found misdiagnosis of melanoma has superseded breast biopsies as the leading cause of legal action against pathologists.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately for us, Drs Massi and LeBoit have produced a masterful new guide to help keep us out of the courts.

*Histologic Diagnosis of Nevi and Melanoma* is a pleasure to read. It is beautifully designed with gorgeous illustrations, elegant typeset and high-quality glossy pages. The first-half of the book covers criteria for the diagnosis of nevi and reviews the many different forms of nevi including melanotic macules, 'common' nevi, Spitz nevi, nevi of special sites, and dysplastic/Clark nevi. The second-half of the book delineates criteria for the diagnosis of melanoma and covers the traditional subtypes of melanoma as well as the more esoteric forms and diagnostically challenging expressions of melanoma such as nevoid melanoma, spitzoid melanoma, recurrent melanoma, and regressing melanoma. It is somewhat reminiscent of Dr AB Ackerman's classic *Pitfalls in the Histopathologic Diagnosis of Malignant Melanoma* and carries on many of the ideas first posited by Dr Ackerman.

Pathologists tend to come in two forms: those that like words and those that like pictures. This book is for the latter group. Its 760 illustrations are uniformly superb. The photomicrographs are generous in size, technically excellent and highly educational. The histotechnologists responsible for the beautiful sections that form the foundation of this book deserve kudos. I was initially disappointed

that the illustrations are all in black-and-white, but after reading the book, I came to appreciate the elegance and simplicity of the design to the point that I now feel that colorizing the illustrations would diminish them. Simply put, this book is a feast for the eyes. However, for those of you who prefer reams of dense text, you should be forewarned that Drs Massi and LeBoit do not spend much time pondering the many controversies in melanocytic neoplasia and the bibliographies are sometimes brief. The writing is succinct and easily digested, but does not always match the elegance of the design and illustrations.

Alas, no book critique would be complete without a few minor criticisms. Only 12 pages are devoted to the dysplastic/Clark nevus. Regardless of your opinion of the entity, I think any book on melanocytic neoplasia should devote more than 2% of its pages to such a confounding and controversial topic. There are occasional typographical errors, some more amusing than others. ('Carrey's' syndrome: a propensity for slapstick comedy?)

Drs Massi and LeBoit declare that if the reader can learn something 'new, true, and useful' from their work, they judge it a success. This reader can respond with a resounding 'yes!' This is one of the best books I have read in pathology and deserves the highest praise. If your practice includes interpretation of significant numbers of melanocytic tumors, I strongly recommend you add this book to your library.

**Garth R Fraga**

*The University of Kansas School of Medicine,  
Kansas City, KS, USA*

## References

- 1 Troxel D. Error in surgical pathology. *Am J Surg Pathol* 2004;28:1092–1095.