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Book Review

Klatt EC, Kumar V: *Robbins Review of Pathology*, 310 pp, Philadelphia, WB Saunders, 2000 (\$29.95).

As the book review editor of *Modern Pathology*, I was faced with an interesting ethical dilemma: should I review this book that has almost an identical title as my own book reviewed in this Journal a few months ago? Both books were obviously written for the same medical student population. However, because most medical students buy several review books and usually base their decision more on the recommendation of their peers than professors, I wondered whether these two books are really competing with one another. Finally, because I have only nice things to say about the “competition,” I decided to write this review, thinking that my positive reaction would be its best endorsement.

Without any equivocation, this is an excellent review book ideally suited to accompany Robbins’ textbook. Technically, it is the successor of a similar companion compiled many years ago by Carolyn Compton, to which, however, it bears only rough resemblance. In essence, Drs. Klatt and Kumar have produced an entirely new book. With more than 1000 questions, it covers the entire field of pathology, or at least what every self-respecting second year medical student should know. Every question is accompanied by an answer, which is indexed to the relevant pages in the Robbins’ textbook (short and long version).

It is important to note that among all currently available review books of pathology, this is the most clinically oriented. In this respect, it reflects closely the current orientation of the National Boards. The questions might not be verbatim replicas of those on the USMLE-1, but they

give students a fairly good idea of what to expect on the national exam. Most questions are remarkably well constructed and are of high taxonomic grade. Such questions cannot be answered by rote memorization of predigested formulaic answers. The student will have to pose, think, and integrate bits of knowledge from several fields and use a deductive approach to solve these clinicopathologic problems. As such, the book probes not only students’ knowledge of pathology but also their problem-solving skills. It is an excellent exercise in medical thinking and should prepare the students well for further clinical training.

A major new feature that sets this book apart from others is the excellent color photographs generously sprinkled throughout the book. Placed in proper clinical context, these photographs give students direction on how to study pathology, how to interpret visual information, and how to correlate morphology with symptoms or pathogenetic mechanisms. Professors also would be well advised to study the picture-related questions and learn from Drs. Klatt and Kumar how to use photographs of pathologic specimens to improve students’ understanding of basic pathologic processes or how to construe questions pertaining to figures.

In my opinion, this new companion to Robbins’ classical textbook breaks new ground and opens new vistas for both medical students and teachers. It should serve well in both learning and teaching pathology in a clinically oriented manner.

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