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Surgical and medical treatment in art

A. E. H. Emery, M. L. H. Emery
UK: Royal Society of Medicine Press
price £45, pp 138
ISBN 1853156957

This intriguing book is a series of 66 beautifully reproduced art plates each accompanied by an explanatory essay of the surgical, medical or dental procedure illustrated.

Each chapter takes the reader through history, starting from the Nineteenth Dynasty in Egypt in about 1275BC and ending with a stylised painting by the present day artist Ken Currie depicting three oncologists in 2002. Many eminent artists' works are printed including Leonardo da Vinci, van Rijn, Hans Holbien the Younger in the middle ages, through to Bazille, Eakins, Toulouse-Lautrec, Stanley Spencer, L. S. Lowry and Susan MacFarlane of more modern eras.

Two chapters (26 and 56) are of particular interest to the dentist. The 'Tooth Puller' is the seventeenth century painting by Theodor Rombouts in Antwerp, a painter who was influenced by Caravaggio in Rome. This extremely detailed picture illustrates an extraction procedure by what is assumed to be an itinerant dentist. The dramatic and skilful use of lighting effects, clearly learned from Caravaggio, highlight the patient and the operator while the detail of the instruments is exquisite.

The second dental chapter is a painting by Edouard Vuillard in Paris in 1936 of Dr Louis Viau, a dental practitioner of that city. Again the detail is extraordinary, illustrating an early x-ray machine, an electric drill and the dental chair facing a large window to use the natural light. The ornaments, carpets and bookcase give an atmosphere of warmth and competence reassuring to the patients.

Of further particular interest to the dental reader are four chapters illustrating early general anaesthesia in 1841 and 1882, early antiseptic procedures controlling post operative complications and the early use of hypnotism around 1830.

The authors are not afraid of controversy as shown by the reproduction of an advert for tobacco by Rel Ramos (1965) which is exhibited in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art. However the adjacent essay does indicate the now accepted risks associated with smoking.

This book, the second by the authors following *Medicine and art*, does not impose conclusions but poses questions and stimulates thoughts about the development of various procedures. The index is particularly useful as it advises the reader of other historical pictures relevant to medical and allied subjects including references to 24 paintings relating to dentistry, and where they may be viewed.

Anyone interested in the history of dentistry, medicine, surgery, or art will find this volume a valuable addition to the browser shelf of their bookcase.

J. S. Robson

Oxford handbook of dental patient care

C. Scully, A. Kalantzis
UK: Oxford University Press
price £24.95, pp 751
ISBN 0198566239

This is a concise but comprehensive handbook of dental patient care, building on the highly acclaimed first edition. Focusing on clinical dentistry, the breadth of coverage is incredible for such a small book. It targets dentists and 'auxiliary' staff in the hospital, general practice and community settings in North America, the Antipodes, Europe and elsewhere.

This handbook has 13 key chapters, including history taking, investigations, dealing with emergencies, different types of surgery, oral diseases and therapeutics. Although WHO guidelines are not always included, it does include a very important chapter on being a professional in an ever changing and challenging political climate, which inevitably contains some out of date information.

The summary tables in each chapter are extremely helpful, offering a fantastic reference guide for all practitioners including Dental Care Professionals as well as for undergraduate and postgraduate students. The appendices provide a quick reminder for all basic and essential information.

In some chapters, it is encouraging to see web addresses are given for further information. However, it would be useful if details of sources of references and further reading were provided.

Unfortunately, the structure of the oral health care system referred to in the book only applies to England. Practitioners in other countries such as those in America and Europe, to whom this book claims to serve, are neglected. While this book aims to provide for the whole of the dental team, the chapter on being a professional is biased towards dentists. Not all members of the dental team are mentioned and roles of each member lack details. Similarly, other disciplines in the community with whom the dental team can collaborate are not emphasised.

The chapter on oral diseases appears to be the most confusing. While there is a section on caries prevention, there is little detail on dental caries as one of the numerous oral diseases included in this chapter.

It may be criticised that this handbook mainly focuses on treatment rather than prevention and, in a widest sense, health promotion. There is a mixture of American and British English which some readers may find irritating. There are some misleading minor details such as five pieces of fruit rather than portions, as one piece of fruit does not necessarily equate to one portion. The use of politically incorrect terminologies may be problematic in some countries.

Overall though, the *Oxford handbook of dental patient care* is a good pocket size reference book for both students and practitioners at all levels.

S. Kwan