

BOOK REVIEW

Everything a health professional needs to know about genetics

Pointers for practitioners

'Genetics for the Health Sciences'

By Heather Skirton and Christine Patch

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The audience of this book, as identified by the authors, is any health professional who has an interest in genetics. The book has a number of useful components, including the use of cases to illustrate the various points, key practice points, the use of self-test questions at the end of the chapters, and a listing of further resources. For example, early on in the book there is a section on dealing with unexpected information when taking a family history. In this example, the male partner of a couple who comes for genetic counseling because of the birth of a

child with ocular albinism is unexpectedly suspected to have Marfan syndrome (which had previously not been diagnosed in him or his family members). The vignette then goes on to describe how the advanced practice nurse seeing this family approaches this possibility, and the family's response.

The key practice points are generally one or two sentences long, but provide a good summation of the information discussed on the previous pages (for example, following a section that discusses the post-mortem examination of a newborn, the key practice point

highlights that tissue obtained for karyotyping should never be placed in formalin). There are several of these key practice points scattered throughout the book, and I thought all were exceptionally helpful. The self-test questions are usually short-answer questions, which make the reader really consider the material. For example, following the section on adult-onset disorders, one of the questions asks 'Is it worthwhile undertaking genetic tests for a man whose father had genetic hemochromatosis? Explain your response.'

The list of further resources is comprehensive, but not overlong. Many of them are websites for organizations based in the UK, but not all. Those that are printed materials are generally up to date.

Before I read this book, I assumed that I probably wouldn't learn anything, having been a medical geneticist for over 30 years. I can say that I was (pleasantly) surprised to find that I learned quite a bit, particularly in the realm of cancer genetics and approaches to genetic counseling for older adults. Although I concur with the recommended audience for this book, I would also add that it's a nice resource for newly trained genetics professionals as well ■

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