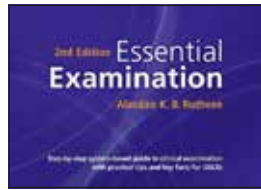


Book Reviews

ESSENTIAL EXAMINATION

Alasdair K Ruthven, Scion(2010), ISBN 1904842844, £16.99

‘One finger in the throat and one in the rectum makes a good diagnostician.’



These were the words of the eminent 19th century physician Sir William Osler. It is after him that the Osler’s nodes of sub-acute endocarditis are named. Often quoted, but rarely seen, these are routinely observed for in the examination of the cardiovascular system.

Structured and detailed patient examination remains the beginning and bedrock of patient assessment centuries later, despite advances in medical science.

I first thought when offered this book to review by the Editor it was perhaps an attempt to amuse a fellow grumpy radiologist, many of whom, like I, at times vocalise our thoughts on immediate imaging replacing the art of history taking and examination... especially at 2am in the morning on call!

Essential examination has a sense of appeal in the simple, structured and methodical manner in which it sets out in a thorough, yet practical manner how to examine the human body. The text is rather devoid of images, which may be a disadvantage for those just beginning the skill of clinical examination, but is otherwise robust and complete.

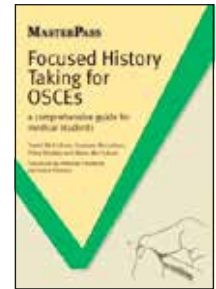
Although not pocket sized like many competitor texts, it more than makes up for it with its practical ring-bound design and ‘bend-ability’. Not just in bending to fit the pocket, but to take the brunt of nervous sweaty hands prior to the Professor’s ward round or in the OSCE examination waiting round.

With the now commonality of smart-phones, tablets and the like, it sometimes seems almost impossible that paper can still win in a relentless race to electronic supremacy. However, now and again there remains a beauty in the smell, feel and realism of a book, just like using the simplicity of one’s hands in the journey of identifying illness.

Ian Bickle

FOCUSED HISTORY TAKING FOR OSCEs A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS

David McCollum, Graham McCollum, Priha Shukla and Peter McCollum Masterpass £25.99



‘Focused History Taking for OSCEs – a comprehensive guide for medical student’ is one of only a handful of published texts today dedicated to the art of history taking. Written jointly by both recent medical graduates and an experienced Professor of Surgery, this guide emulates perfectly the *teacher-student* relationship – containing all the necessary information and advice for students on how to pass OSCEs but also the underlying principles of taking a good history, and how to integrate this into a successful and professional interaction with patients. Suitable as a revision and learning tool for students, but also as a teaching guide for clinicians, this textbook approaches each clinical scenario in a systematic and appropriately structured fashion – working from first principles with common presenting complaints as sub-chapters within each specialty, then discussing a list of potential differentials for each complaint - guaranteeing enough information to impress in a clinical environment, without overloading. Of particular benefit to the student is the list of recommended investigations and management options which follows each history. Coupled with a list of reproducible questions for patients in a clinical environment, this book helps to contextualise common clinical scenarios for students, and expertly approaches the idea that simply asking a question isn’t enough, but needing to know why you are asking it and how it will inform your decision and subsequent clinical actions. This is further helped by an ‘*Important Points*’ section for consideration with each history

This book can be highly recommended for both students and teachers keen to adopt a more structured and systematic approach to their learning and teaching. It should be avoided however, by those searching for that elusive quick-fix solution to pass their OSCEs, as the book is detailed and quite text-heavy. This shouldn’t worry the majority of medical students who want to invest in a reliable and professional reference guide for their undergraduate learning. A definite addition to any medical students bookshelf.

Aidan Bannon and Dr Gerry Gormley