The Fundamentals of Phlebology
Venous disease for clinicians

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WEBSITE www.rsmpress.co.uk
PUBLISHED 2007/112 pp/$82.95

OVERALL RATING Good
STRENGTHS Review of anatomy; descriptions of newer techniques, treatments, and diagnostic equipment
WEAKNESSES Price; mediocre photographs; US pharmacology
AUDIENCE Physicians interested in the pathophysiology, diagnosis, and treatment of venous disease

The Fundamentals of Phlebology is a primer for clinicians on the pathophysiology and treatment of venous diseases. As stated by the editor, it is born of the lack of medical education and training in the care of a common morbidity.

The book contains good overviews of newer techniques in the diagnosis and treatment of venous disease, including light-pulse therapy, duplex ultrasonography-directed treatment, and radiofrequency ablation. It helpfully describes common pitfalls, sclerosing agents (albeit based on US pharmacopeia), and practice pearls such as postprocedure ambulation.

The book’s discussion of possible adverse events is wanting (eg, there is no mention of pulmonary embolus), but it does emphasize the necessity of planning rapid responses in case of medical emergencies well in advance (such as the suggestion of automated external defibrillators in every medical clinic in the event of anaphylaxis). It also stresses the importance of meeting or exceeding state (or provincial) standards and organizing malpractice insurance coverage for procedures as well as aftercare.

Chapters could be better organized with main headings at the beginning, and the book’s index is insufficient (eg, there is no listing under “necrosis,” one of the more common adverse reactions, although it is discussed). For $82.95, I was disappointed that the photo illustrations resembled those in glossy-print “miracle-cure” advertisements: the before and after shots had completely different lighting, which can inflate improvement.

Nothing can substitute hands-on experience in surgical procedures, so the book might best serve as a good companion text for physicians taking courses to upgrade their current skills, for residents training in phlebology, or for anyone interested in the newer techniques available.

—Wendy R. Mooney MD

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Your child’s best shot
A parent’s guide to vaccination

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PUBLISHED 2006/392 pp/$21.95

OVERALL RATING Mediocre
STRENGTHS Provides excellent information; covers all aspects of vaccination
WEAKNESSES Lengthy and dense; technical language makes it difficult to read
AUDIENCE Parents

This book is meant to inform parents about the effectiveness and safety of the vaccines available for prevention of childhood infectious diseases. It is also clearly meant to help parents overcome fears about vaccines, which originate from a number of sources and have led some jurisdictions to decrease
vaccine uptake with disastrous consequences. To be truly useful for parents, such a book should cover the range of vaccines available, pointing out why each is necessary in terms of the risk imposed by infection and disease, the degree of protection provided, important side effects, safety concerns and contraindications, and the dosing schedule. This should be provided in a format accessible for all parents, especially in terms of readability.

This book provides all of the requisite information and more. Beginning with an explanation of basic immune system functioning as well as the systems in place in Canada to assure vaccine safety, it looks at individual infectious diseases in detail, providing information about their agents and modes of transmission, the associated illnesses and their management, and what vaccines are available, including how they are produced, their side effects, and evidence of their effectiveness. Arguments about the general safety of vaccines are provided throughout, with examples of how disease can spread when vaccine uptake decreases. An extensive “Question and Answer” section and a list of other resources are provided at the end.

Unfortunately, all of this detail comes at the expense of accessibility. The book is dense and lengthy, and the reading level is extremely high. Much technical language is used; although the authors attempt to clarify certain concepts with brief explanations, most lay readers will find this book difficult. For this reason, I would not recommend it to parents.

—Donald B. Langille MD MHSc

Dr Langille is a Professor in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology in the Faculty of Medicine at Dalhousie University in Halifax, NS.

Rainbows in washtubs
Diagnostic mysteries in agromedicine

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PUBLISHED 2007/124 pp/$17.95

OVERALL RATING Good
STRENGTHS Easy and enjoyable read; provides a useful approach to agromedicine
WEAKNESSES Not a practical reference guide
AUDIENCE Anyone interested in the links between agriculture and health

Rainbows in Washtubs. Diagnostic Mysteries in Agromedicine is a reflective collection of fascinating agromedicine vignettes. Dr Schuman, a pediatrician who became an epidemiologist and later an investigative public health physician, presents a variety of clinical challenges that are solved as clinical riddles—almost like a rural practice “CSI.” The first story, “Finding Rainbows in Washtubs,” begins with an infant, a 6-year-old, a 9-year-old, and their parents presenting to a rural doctor in an emergency department with a variety of symptoms: stiff neck, ataxia, muscular twitching, blurred vision, cramps, and diarrhea. The mystery is later solved on a public health home investigation that reveals a rainbow in the washtub, which is actually the effect of a toxic oil-soluble organophosphate pesticide. Another vignette traces an outbreak of pneumonia in schoolchildren to playground soil contaminated with histoplasmosis spores. And yet another links a rash of rashes in floral shops to a new, highly allergic imported plant that causes severe contact dermatitis. This book is an enjoyable read and, collectively, the vignettes present an approach to agromedicine challenges that will complement reference textbooks, especially for physicians who care for rural families.

—James Rourke MD CCFP(EM) MCISc

Dr Rourke is Dean of Medicine at Memorial University of Newfoundland in St John’s.

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