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Book Reviews

Pickard's Manual of Operative Dentistry 8th edition (2003)

Authors: E. A. M. Kidd, B. G. N. Smith and T. F. Watson
Publisher: Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK
Price: £35.00
ISBN: 0-19-850928-6

As the authors state in their preface, it is 41 years since the book was first published, and it is still recommended on students' reading lists. That is evidence enough that the authors have kept it abreast of current concepts over the period. Oral disease has changed over that time, as has the dentist's approach from one of isolated treatment episodes to patient management with a major emphasis on prevention.

The book is divided into three sections: disease, treatment and maintenance. For the new edition a chapter on 'bonding to tooth structure' has been added to reflect the developments in operative dentistry, particularly bonding to dentine. The underlying materials science is intermingled with the clinical application. With the continual development of tooth coloured restorative materials and bonding, the role of amalgam as a restorative material has been reduced. For the occlusal cavity, the authors now advocate composite resin instead of amalgam, but they still recommend amalgam for large approximal restorations in posterior teeth.

The book is well laid out, profusely illustrated in colour and easy to read. The authors advise readers to search computer databases of the literature from keywords listed at the beginning of each chapter. Perhaps this is why the further reading at the end of each chapter is particularly brief. This reviewer would like to have seen more comprehensive references to existing literature. The new edition is an excellent introductory text for undergraduates, and reflects the modern patient centred approach to oral health. At this price no student should be without it, and many a practitioner would benefit from being updated in the application of contemporary materials science.

T R Pitt Ford

Oral cells and tissues (2003)

Author: Philias R. Garant
Publisher: Quintessence Publishing Co. Ltd., New Malden, Surrey, UK
Price: £68.00
ISBN: 0-86715-429-2

The author of this (large) paperback is a research scientist and professor in the Department of Periodontics at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, USA where he is also Director of the Basic Science Education course for clinical postdoctoral programs. As such, he has a wealth of basic science research experience and it is no surprise that as stated in the preface, the wish was to produce a book which would bring our understanding of the basic biology of the oral cavity to bear on the daily clinical practice of dentistry. The book must therefore be seen in this context and the flood of new information that has arisen particularly since the deciphering of the human genome. The book (intended for dental students or researchers new to the biology of the oral cavity) is laid out in 14 chapters, starting with Early Tooth Development, the chapters progress logically through: Dentine; Enamel; Oral Mucosa; Gingiva and Periodontal Ligament, Root Formation; Cementogenesis; Bone; Salivary Glands; Oral Somatosensory Systems; Muscle; Cartilage and Temporomandibular Joint; the Immune System and finally Phagocytic Cells. This book therefore aims to be pretty comprehensive and each chapter (supported by numerous references) finishes with either basic science or clinical correlations or both.

Nevertheless, whilst a huge area is covered, and in some detail, readers should be aware of some reservations. The text is enlivened with colourful diagrams and (mostly) monochrome pictures (including SEMs, histological sections etc.) intended to aid understanding but many of the diagrams are themselves quite complicated and overall, both the text and diagrams tend to provide information overload in the effort of avoiding over-simplification. At £68 it is probably also quite expensive for undergraduates and is unlikely to be an easy read for that group: any undergraduate would need to have a good basic understanding of molecular biology and

molecular biological/immunhistochemical techniques and terminology before they embarked on reading it—especially to avoid drowning under the weight of acronyms (almost inevitable unfortunately these days!). Having said that, all developing clinicians must have some understanding of these subjects—they are fundamental to the advancement of clinical science and this book does bravely attempt to bridge the gap. However, the main problem is that the subject area is vast (particularly for one author and in such rapidly developing areas of research) and is aimed at comparatively disparate groups. Thus, for serious researchers some aspects will inevitably be out of date and/or be too superficially covered (e.g. the chapter on bone; details regarding integrins and their structure) whilst for undergraduates, the level of assumed knowledge is high and the amount of detail possibly too great—maybe even off putting—particularly when conflicting research findings are presented in already complex areas. Furthermore, whilst there is a fairly repetitive structure to each chapter (basic structure is followed by an embryological/developmental overview before leading on to detailed discussion of the cellular components, their function, secretions etc.) some details lacked specific relevance. In addition, whilst it is an excellent idea to relate basic science to clinical practice, more exciting examples to 'grab' the reader could probably have been found, even if they do not directly impinge on 'everyday' clinical practice. For example, without going into science fiction overdrive, exciting developments in the knowledge base relating to tooth development (Sonic Hedgehog, Shh) or the aetiology of clefting could perhaps have been made rather more of whilst in the chapter on muscle, the potential implications of new work relating to facial form and muscle structure are perhaps underplayed.

Overall, this is a useful reference book although it may (to some readers) fall between two stools: for an undergraduate, its use needs to be thoughtfully directed whilst for the more serious researcher, it provides a useful starting point or overview.

F Luther

Treatment planning in primary dental care (2003)

Authors: Ann Shearer and Anthony Mellor
Publisher: Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK
Price: £24.95
ISBN: 0-19-8050895-6

This is quite a concise book that the authors state is aimed at final year undergraduate students in order to help them prepare cases for finals examinations. The initial sections are also useful for more junior students. The text is generally very up to date regarding several controversial issues, and gives an overview of a large amount of material and issues in restorative treatment planning. However there are a limited number of references and suggestions for further reading, and these are all grouped at the end of the book, rather than at the end of each chapter. This is especially an issue since the style of the text does assume that the reader has (or could have) carried out further study or reading in each specialised section and sometime makes references to issues that could only be covered well in larger or more specialised texts. The clinical and scientific basis of the text is excellent and reflects current thinking and practice in primary care restorative dentistry, although some would argue with some comments regarding the timing and use of radiographs for the assessment and monitoring of caries and periodontal status.

This is therefore a good synopsis, bringing together many issues. The book still fulfils the aims of the authors well for a small volume and would be useful reading for those about half to two-thirds of the way through their undergraduate course to help bring together what may seem disparate subjects.

Mark Ide