

The acid text – an uncontrolled trial proved successful (n=1).

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Clinical Paediatrics for Postgraduate Examinations. 2nd Ed. By Terence Stephenson and Hamish Wallace. (Pp 212; £16.95 paperback.) Churchill Livingstone, 1995. ISBN 0-443-05226-3.

There will always be a market for a book which claims to assist success in examinations. Thus I predict that this book will be eagerly selected for purchase, but then will only add to the burden of lists and details to be memorised. This is my major criticism of the book: it gives nothing different, no spark to the ultimate drudgery of exam revision.

The aim of the book, however, is to summarise clinical methods, including differential diagnoses, at the level of expertise required for the MRCP and DCH clinical exams. In this it succeeds. It is a difficult task to be simultaneously all encompassing and succinct. The disadvantage of achieving this aim is that the text becomes small and the reading dry.

The book gives general instruction about the mechanism of the MRCP and DCH examinations, some general advice about

examining children (some of which seems superfluous, but I guess has to be stated: 'Never hurt a child ...'), and tables of typical long and short cases recently encountered in the exam. The bulk of the book describes examination techniques and lists clinical signs for each system. These chapters also contain more detailed sections describing conditions common in long and short cases, for example cystic fibrosis, chronic inflammatory bowel disease, the floppy baby, and the ex-preterm neonate. The layout includes a wide margin for extra notes.

A gap in the market is successfully filled by this book. It is indeed a 'pocket companion' for polishing exam revision. There is a more detailed Australian book available, aimed at a higher level for the FRACP exam. I found the Australian book easier to read and learn because of its wider layout and the inclusion of memorable cartoon diagrams, but then it doesn't fit in my pocket.

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MRCP Part I Paediatric MCQ Revision Book. By Ian Maconochie and Jo Wilmhurst. (Pp 231; £14.50 paperback.) PasTest, 1995. ISBN 0-906896-39-8.

The paucity of paediatric multiple choice

revision books for the MRCP examination makes this book valuable for the exam candidate. An added advantage is that, as a recent edition, the practice questions encompass recent advances in molecular and clinical technology which are prevalent in the exam.

The book is published by PasTest, a company running numerous intensive study courses for postgraduate medical examinations. From candidates attending the courses and subsequently sitting the exams, the company obtains information regarding past questions. Thus it is able to update and modify questions consonant with the maturation of the exams. Indeed on reading this book, the level and scope of questions seem well researched, well written, and appropriate – frighteningly lifelike. There are more than 300 questions, arranged by subject and followed by solutions, which include succinct and helpful explanations. For maximum terror a complete practice exam of mixed questions is also included.

As mentioned in the book, the MRCP part I exam is highly competitive because of its fixed pass rate. Practising as many appropriate multiple choice questions as possible is the best way to acquire the required competitive edge. Don't tell your friends about this book.

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