

101 years of a new kind of rays

By: Peh WCG

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Dr Peh's book is a definitive work on the history of medical imaging, and the book makes suitable reading for radiologists, radiographers, medical physicists, and non-radiological medical doctors as well as for laymen who are interested in the different facets of medical history. Thumbing through the pages, one begins to realise how much time and effort Dr Peh has given to this work in order to generate the kind of details included in the book.

The first chapters of the book deal with X-ray alone. It begins with a detailed, geographic, and academic, chronology of the discoverer of X-rays, Dr Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen. It also goes into the controversy of who discovered X-rays. The author undertook a trip to Lennep (where Röntgen was born) and to Würzburg (where Röntgen performed his monumental work), and the author gives a detailed description of both places.

This is followed by a description of different major innovations, including collimation device, the invention of the Bucky Diaphragm, rotating anodes, tomogram, and image intensifier—all of which enhance radiological diagnosis. An integrated discussion of the invention of oral, intravenous, intrathecal, and intra-arterial contrast agents is also provided, along with a brief mention of the Seldinger technique as a forerunner of interventional radiology.

Later chapters describe the history of medical ultrasound, computed tomography (CT) and magnetic

resonance (MR) scanning, as well as nuclear medicine. The development of a related discipline, radiotherapy, then follows. The book ends with mention of the radiological training programmes in different parts of the world.

Medical history can be dry, but Dr Peh is cognizant of this fact and he has taken pains to inject a proper dose of entertainment from time to time. For example, Dr George Charles de Hevesy, Nobel Laureate, father of Nuclear Medicine “managed to confirm his suspicions that his landlady was recycling his leftover food. He spiked the leftover food on his plate with a radioactive substance and later detected the radioactivity in his next recooked meal by means of a gold-leaf electroscope.”

If one accepts the fact that no work is perfect, then imperfection perhaps can be linked to the history of CT and MR, which is presented rather briefly, even though the merits of CT and MR now far outweigh the importance of X-ray in clinical practice. This minor issue, however, cannot mask the fact that it is a work well done.

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Practical HRT

Ed: Kenemans P, Barentsen R, Van de Weijer PMH

Medical Forum Internationl, PO Box 655, 3700 AR Zeist, The Netherlands

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“Practical HRT” reminds me a lot of “Aids to MRCOG.” The writing style is austere and approach to presentation is straight out of desktop publishing. However, it is not difficult to read for anyone reasonably familiar with the subject matter. The only relief

from the relentless onslaught of tightly packaged information and recommendations are the flow charts, tables, and occasional black and white diagram. The aim appears to have been to cram in as much information as possible into a relatively small book.

The book begins with a simple definitions page. This is followed by a flow chart titled "How to advise the climacteric woman: the chain of reasoning." On the opposite page the relevant issues are detailed, together with page numbers indicating where these issues are dealt with in the book. It is a very effective way of setting out the book. Sections I and II discuss the indications for treatment. This is followed by section III, which deals with the contraindications and risks of HRT. The rest of the book, titled "Guidelines for practical HRT and the management of women on HRT" is perhaps more appropriate for European countries than Hong Kong. For example, the authors recommend a mammogram for every woman starting HRT and thereafter every two years for women with a normal risk of getting breast cancer and annually for women at high risk. Similarly, there is a relatively large section on menopausal symptoms and how to manage them. The symptom profile in Hong Kong and much of Asia appears to be substantially different to those described in the book and mammography for every woman starting HRT may not be a realistic proposition in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, on the whole, the discussion is balanced and reasoned.

The book appears to operate on two levels. At one level, exemplified by sections titled "The basics," it is too simple, especially considering the book's intended readership are gynaecologists. Sections titled "The theory" are generally excellent. However, anyone trying to gain an overview of the relevant literature is likely to find these sections too succinct. Whole areas of research are often reduced to a single sentence. Nevertheless, it does give coherent recommendations for sometimes difficult issues. Most of the major medical issues about HRT are addressed in a systematic manner. However, the language and style may be

difficult for some, especially those who are not conversant with the language of research and scientific literature. An example is "The multivariate adjusted risk for current users of oestrogen plus progestogen, appears to be 1.41 (95% CI-1.15-1.74)."

To the authors' credit, they point out that many of their recommendations are based on the best available evidence but some of it is incomplete and the recommendations may change in the light of new evidence. A large amount of research is published every year on the menopause and HRT. A book like this will almost certainly need to be updated regularly. This second edition comes just 12 months after the first edition. However, both the format and the style allow for easy updating and this may be one of the strengths of the book.

This book can be recommended for gynaecologists and physicians who have an interest in HRT and the menopause. Although the stated target of the book is European gynaecologists, there is much in it that will be useful in Asia. The approach is commendably scientific. It gives the reader reasoned advice and tries to collate the literature supporting the advice and recommendations. However, the literature could have been reviewed less succinctly and the language at times could have been less technical. This would have increased its potential readership considerably. Those who want to read further on the topic will have an excellent start in the references provided.

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Principles and practice of isokinetics in sports medicine and rehabilitation

Ed: Chan KM, Maffulli N, Korkia P, Li CT

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US\$29.50, pp 214, ISBN 962 356 016 8*

This book was written and edited by an academic orthopaedic and sports medicine expert, a consultant orthopaedic surgeon, a sports scientist and a research physiotherapist with contributions from distinguished international academics and researchers. Such a combination of authors has given a wide perspective to the book with respect to isokinetic technology. As stated

in the preface, this book was written as a practical guide for isokinetic assessment that highlights the scientific value of isokinetic exercise for sports medicine and sports sciences.

The book is written in simple English and is easy to read. It is divided into three sections. Section 1 is an