

X-ray diagnosis: a physician's approach

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The cover picture of *X-Ray Diagnosis: A Physician's Approach* depicts a stethoscope overlying a jigsaw of a chest X-ray and correctly illustrates the concept of diagnostic radiology: fitting together the jigsaw pieces of information that can be deciphered from the X-ray images to try and reach a diagnosis. Some of the most essential pieces of information could be given on the X-ray request form. However, the form is often less informative than it could be, either because it is indecipherable, or because it is readable but written by a well-meaning, exhausted junior doctor without sufficient experience to know what important details to include. Although some senior doctors make the effort, there are those who strive to withhold information, presumably so they can hold X-rays upside down before a ward night-light and impress their befuddled juniors with their diagnostic skill!

For a radiologist, *X-Ray Diagnosis: A Physician's Approach* is a curious publication. The advice given to the clinician regarding the interpretation of X-rays is a disappointment. Firstly, the brief advice given is applicable to any branch of medicine and does not reveal any specific secrets of the trade for physicians. Secondly, the quaint language is reminiscent of textbooks of the 1940s. Thirdly, the inaccuracies are epitomised by calling barium a 'dye'. Fourthly, of the 103 images, more than 20% are not plain X-ray films but computed tomography scans, barium angiograms, and even one percutaneous transhepatic

biliary drainage! In addition, it is intriguing that in Singapore, the physicians—and not radiologists—seem to diagnose special investigations. Perhaps this is why, of two intravenous urographs, the discussion of the first is wrong and the second has a seriously incomplete differential diagnosis. The remaining images, mostly chest radiographs, are reasonable in terms of the problems they illustrate; some, however, have lost quality in the reproduction—one expects better from the publishers. The variable quality leaves the reader unsure as to whether the abnormalities identified are the patient's or the printer's, and results in the obvious disappointment of learning which signs you are supposed to see only when reading the denouement. I have to admit that I enjoyed solving the problems posed but I would expect any trainee radiologist to be able to say a lot more than is found in the explanations given in the book. Despite the promising cover, this book seems to have been 'thrown together' and, with so much else to read, I cannot recommend it as an essential book—fun may be, but not essential.

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Essentials of human nutrition

Ed: Mann J, Truswell AS

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It is unusual to find such a broad spectrum of information on nutrition in one volume, and *Essentials of Human Nutrition* fills an existing gap in this area. The target audience includes doctors, medical students,

nurses, dietitians, and food scientists; different sections may be more relevant to different professions.

The introductory chapter outlines the contents of