BOOK REVIEWS


The colour illustrated book contains 228 questions aimed at testing candidates in their knowledge of cardiology for postgraduate exams such as MRCP UK. It concentrates on adult cardiology. The majority are based around colour photographs, ECG’s or radiological investigations and are all presented and reproduced at an excellent high standard. Following each of the questions on the reverse page is a discussion around the subject - much more useful than just a simple answer.

All the classic cases in cardiology are covered together with less common conditions and investigations which are rarely seen such as phonocardiograms. This latter aspect works beautifully to test and teach auscultatory findings in the ‘silent’ environment of a book.

There are many books now available in self assessment format for MRCP. This one does stand out. It is relatively expensive but the cost is justified by the high quality of pictures and illustrations. It is well worth the attention of MRCP candidates.

The final proof - my SHO used it, found it valuable and passed MRCP. No more needs to be said.

N Ineson


The Scottish Women’s Hospitals of the First World War were the inspiration of one remarkable woman, Dr Elsie Englis, who was keen to demonstrate what women could contribute to the war effort, particularly in the field of medicine.

The book tells the story of a 100 bedded Unit, surgeons, doctors and nurses, that was offered to the War Office or the Red Cross and summarily rejected. The all female hospital then went to France where it was welcomed by the French authorities. Beds were increased to 600 as the hospital was involved in the offensive of 1915, the Somme Battles of 1916 and in the final struggles of 1918.

The book is beautifully written and researched by the author who herself was a Captain in the RAMC 1944-45. A wealth of reminiscences reveal the experiences and personalities of the women involved and the assessment of the medical work will interest medical historians. The Women of Royaumont makes an useful and unusual contribution to the history of war.

DM Wilson


Personal diaries are a valuable source of information for the military historian and for the general reader they provide a fascinating insight into life in the armies of previous centuries. Spellmount are to be congratulated on their Library of Military History series which contains many such accounts. The diary of a military surgeon from the early 19th century is welcomed but if you are expecting to find contemporary accounts of the treatment of the sick and wounded of Wellington’s Peninsular campaign, you will not find it here.

Sadly Boutflower has confined his daily journal to that of an account of the movement and battles of his regiment. The journal has been produced as it was written, without any form of editing, illustration or additional footnotes. Perhaps the reader would have benefited from the latter, especially concerning the various engagements and personalities mentioned. This lack of editing has tended to make the book rather bland and as such will lose a valuable source of readers amongst the military medical professions.

The book also lacks maps which would have proved useful to those who do not have access to the general works on the Peninsular War.

It is felt that at £19.95 this is rather an expensive book considering the above points.

PH Starling


As our forefathers advance in years and enjoy their retirement many have set about to put their service with the RAMC into words. In the case of Charles Evans his experiences, beginning as a medical student at Oxford and then as a Medical Officer with the XIVth Army during World War two, make enjoyable reading. The scene set in the initial pages of the book will be very familiar to many readers, as Evans reports to Crookham undertakes hygiene training at Mytchett and is issued with an assortment of strange clothing and equipment prior to his proceeding on draft to India.

The main bulk of the book details the author’s service in India and Burma and it is the telling of this story that makes compelling reading. Evans relates his experiences so well that as you read on you can almost feel the heat and taste the dust, sitting in his jeep on the endless convoys or sheltering in the monsoon rains as the roads become impassable with the mud. Although doing a valuable job with the Forward Malarial Treatment Units, Charles Evans longed to become a Regimental Medical Officer. Eventually achieving this aim allows the reader to experience the hardships and dangers of being right in the heat of battle and not only having the enemy to contend with but also a very inhospitable terrain, making not only the treatment and evacuation of the wounded difficult but also the doctors own survival.
Throughout the book the reader will find short passages that explain the background to the campaigns or the units that the author served with and even the geography of the country, all which help the layman get a better feel for the narrative. Obviously a lot of work has gone into this background information. There are also photographs and many line illustrations which add to the quality of the book.

More and more of these ‘memoirs’ are becoming available and the young doctor will find that there are still lessons to be learnt from our ‘old campaigners’.

PH STARLING

CD-ROM REVIEW


This attractive CD-ROM is part of a series entitled “Topics in International Health” which has been produced by the Wellcome Trust as an educational resource for medical students, academics and healthcare professionals. Each CD-ROM has the same structure and comprises a number of interactive tutorials, a collection of images which can be downloaded for display or teaching purposes, and a glossary of common terms (Fig 1). The three other titles which have been produced in this series to date are: sexually-transmitted disease, sickle cell disease and trachoma.

The malaria CD-ROM is the work of a distinguished panel of British malariologists, most of them based at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. It addresses all the research issues which are currently important in the understanding of this disease, but at the same time is written in clear and accessible language. The subjects covered include the life cycle of Plasmodium, the epidemiology of malaria, and issues relating to immunity, control, microscopy, diagnosis and treatment.

I greatly enjoyed working through this CD-ROM and particularly appreciated the Notepad feature which allows you to make notes as you go, and to save or print these out at a later stage. At £95.00 the CD-ROM is clearly not one that most doctors will wish to go out and buy, but it should certainly be an essential stock item in every hospital or medical school library.

AMJ CROFT

OBITUARIES

Regimental Headquarters would welcome self-written obituaries and when completed they should be forwarded to Regimental Secretary RHQ, RAMC, Keogh Barracks, Ash Vale, Aldershot, Hants GU12 5RQ.

Fig 1