

BOOK REVIEWS

Difficult Diagnoses in Dermatology, Lebowitz M : Churchill Livingstone, New York, 1988; pp 450, Price, £ 50.00.

This 450 pages, hard-bound, recently released first edition of the book on both commonly encountered dermatological problems as well as relatively uncommon conditions such as the perforating dermatoses is written by the experts in the field. Twenty three interesting clinical entities are discussed, namely; (1) Vasculitis, (2) Systemic sclerosis and pseudoscleroderma, (3) Cutaneous lesions in connective tissue diseases, (4) Raynaud's phenomenon and related forms of cutaneous vasospasm, (5) Immuno-compromised patients with recurrent cutaneous infection, (6) Chronic generalized erythroderma, (7) The immunobullous skin diseases, (8) Fever and rash, (9) Rash and eosinophilia, (10) Pustular disorders in the neonate, (11) Neonatal bullous diseases, (12) Neonatal and infantile erythrodermas, (13) Ichthyosiform dermatoses, (14) Alopecia in children, (15) Alopecia in adults, (16) Chronic urticaria, (17) Pruritus, (18) Annular erythemas, (19) The perforating dermatoses, (20) Hirsutism, (21) Panniculitis, (22) Photosensitivity, and (23) The dermatoses of pregnancy.

The book outlines a systematic approach to the diagnosis with due emphasis on the significant elements of the history, physical examination and selection of appropriate diagnostic tests. Each chapter follows a definite pattern like brief introduction, classification of the group and/or important causes, a brief description of each condition, followed by the approach

to the patient in an easy-to-follow steps, and in some conditions the management. Thus, the authors set out to present a clear approach to a dermatological disease that will enable any practising physician to arrive at a reasonable differential diagnosis through a logical approach. The material is up-to-date with references upto 1986. The chapters are well illustrated by many black and white sharply produced photographs. The text has been simplified with the help of line diagrams and especially the tables. It is amazing how much material is compressed into so small a space. The chapters on systemic sclerosis, Raynaud's phenomenon, pustular disorders in neonates, fever and rash, annular erythemas, photosensitivity, and dermatoses of pregnancy are excellent. The androgens are well illustrated in the chapter on hirsutism, but alopecia areata, infective causes and SLE are missing in the chapter on alopecia in adults as is the congenital syphilis in neonatal bullous diseases. Chapters on chronic urticaria and vasculitis are brief and need more extensive illustration. If the title had included a few more common and puzzling conditions such as the palmo-plantar keratodermas, eczemas, oral mucosal ulcers and nail dystrophies, it would fit the wide coverage better. The type is very clear and the price is right. The book will help interested students and serve as a useful reference for the practising physicians and dermatologists.

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