Connecting basic science, clinical knowledge, research and patient communication

Training in medicine

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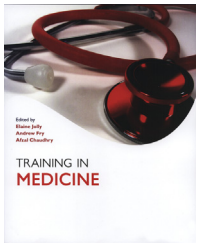

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I still remember my clerkships from many years ago, when we all relied on the Oxford pocket books on surgery and medicine. Despite their small size, they were remarkably comprehensive. *Training in medicine* is considerably larger and more comprehensive; probably the result of how much medicine has evolved since.

This book is a pleasure to read; in 21 sections, it covers a variety of 327 essential topics. The connection of basic science, clinical knowledge, research and patient communication is a huge strength. The 56 contributors have mastered an impressive task by bringing all this information together in such an accessible way, using clear figures, graphs and tables to elegantly explain and summarise complex concepts. Given this comprehensiveness, the book is remarkably affordable.

Yet, I wonder what the specific niche for this book would be. Clearly, it is too big to slip into a white coat pocket — though, we do not wear white coats anymore. Moreover, we have also largely replaced quick-reference booklets with digital devices. So it was more likely written as a learning resource rather than as a point-of-care quick referencing book. But then, it would have benefitted from an introduction section with educational suggestions on how to effectively use this book during training. After all, our knowledge on human learning has also evolved since my clerkship days.

It could for example be an "entry book" in which each topic serves as a starting point for study, assisting the trainee in choosing relevant additional learning resources. But then, a "suggestions for further reading" section at the end of each topic would be needed and, unfortunately, only about 10% of the sections have such suggestions or references. This is probably the result of the editors' decision to allow the authors considerable freedom in formatting their contributions. Some authors, for instance, included key points or clinical lessons, but many did not.

In all, *Training in medicine* is a clear, concise and comprehensive book. Its value for training, however, will inevitably depend on whether it is used in an educationally effective and efficient manner during training, and this is where the book could have provided more guidance.

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