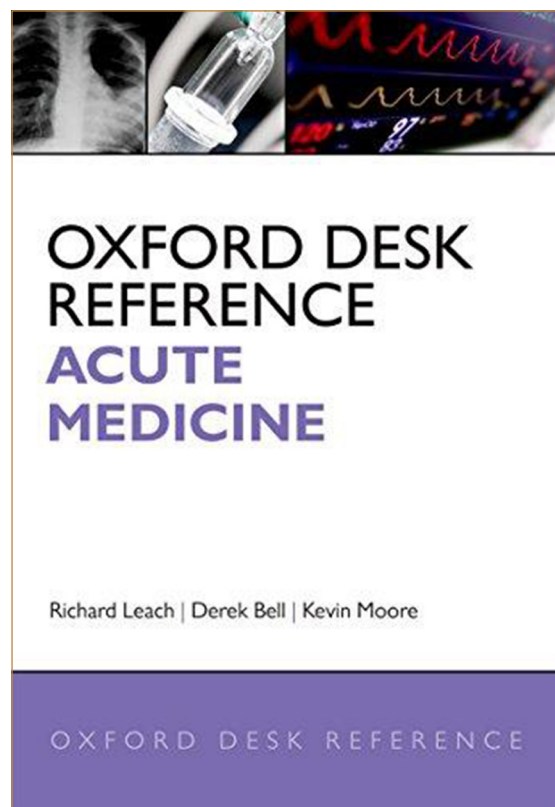


Book Review: Oxford Desk Reference, Acute Medicine

Edited by Richard Leach, Derek Bell, Kevin Moore
Oxford University Press, 2016

This book was published in hardback by Oxford University Press in 2016. Comprising 824 pages of small font text, it covers the full range of conditions which would be encountered on the acute medical take in considerable detail. The book is laid out in a traditional format, with most of the chapters defined by a physiological system – cardiovascular, respiratory, endocrinology, etc, and subsections for individual diagnoses within each of the chapters. This inevitably creates a challenge for conditions such as pulmonary embolism, which finds itself in the ‘cardiac diseases and resuscitation’ chapter, although in practice it commonly presents with respiratory symptoms. However, the indexing is good and navigation through the text to find specific conditions is relatively easy. There is also a chapter specifically dedicated to ‘emergencies in the elderly’, covering topics such as delirium, incontinence, falls and syncope, as well as a section on multiprofessional assessment of patients with complex needs. Given the increasing proportion of older patients presenting a part of the acute medical take, this chapter is very welcome, and perhaps warrants even greater attention in future editions. There is also a short chapter at the end of the book on ethics and end-of-life issues, which also represent a common challenge in the Acute Medical Unit. I would like to have seen this include some discussion on pain management, both in the context of palliative care and also in more general acute medical setting, as this is often encountered on the acute medical take. However overall these are relatively minor omissions from an otherwise comprehensive text.

The contributor list reads like a ‘who’s who’ of acute and general medicine, with over 70 different clinicians involved in its production, overseen by the three editors. Inevitably this leads to variability in the style of the different sections within the chapters: some are easy to read with figures, tables and pictures intervening within the text, while others are almost entirely text-based. This is particularly noticeable in the cardiovascular chapter, where



Edited by Richard Leach, Derek Bell, Kevin Moore
Oxford University Press, Published 2016

the sections on acute coronary syndrome and ST elevation myocardial infarction comprise 10 pages with just a single table; in contrast the following section on arrhythmias contains a large number of line drawings, ECGs and tables to illustrate the physiology and management. All illustrations in the paper version of the book are in black and white, which limits the value of the photographs of rashes in the dermatology section. Hopefully these will be available in colour in future electronic editions of the book.

Marketed at £56.20 in its hard cover version and £39 for the Kindle version, this book represents good value for money and will be a useful addition to the ward office or library of any acute medical unit. Its size and weight means it is, as its name suggests, a ‘desk reference’ rather than a pocket guide. The level of detail would also lend itself to be used as a revision guide for the MRCP examination or acute medicine speciality certificate exam. Either way, I am certain it would be widely used by a variety of members of the acute medicine team.

Chris Roseveare
Consultant in Acute
Medicine
Lymington New Forest
Hospital
Welworthy Road
Lymington,
SO41 8QD
Email: [chris.roseveare@
southernhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:chris.roseveare@southernhealth.nhs.uk)