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Book review
Pocket guide to chest X-rays. G. Briggs.
172 pages. Price $32.95 including GST *

Lindy Viviers, Senior Resident Medical Officer, Division of Medicine, John Hunter Hospital, Newcastle, NSW

For a quick revision of the basics of chest X-ray interpretation, as well as some more advanced tips, ‘Pocket guide to chest X-rays’ by Greg Briggs is a useful addition to the clinician’s library. The guide begins with a summary of the major radiological modalities and their indications in practice. It explains the techniques of chest radiography in easily understood prose with accompanying diagrams. This is followed by a section on radiological anatomy and a thorough description of normal chest X-rays and variants. It thus offers the reader the chance to consolidate their knowledge of ‘the norm’ with which to compare abnormal X-rays presented in the remainder of its pages.

The book endeavours to be a practical guide to be used as an adjunct to a physician’s practice. It outlines a systematic checklist with which to approach all chest X-rays and this is probably one of its foremost strengths. The bulk of the book is a collection of actual chest X-rays that showcase the common pathologies which clinicians encounter. For a large majority of students and trainees a picture can speak a thousand words and this book offers approximately 50 X-rays of conditions seen in everyday practice. The descriptions of these are straightforward and easy to follow. A noteworthy inclusion is a list of common pitfalls in interpreting chest X-rays, at least one or two of which the honest clinician will recognise.

The appendices are also worth mentioning. One is devoted to various signs in thoracic radiology, which, while being very detailed in its descriptions, would probably be more useful if accompanied by the actual radiological pictures. Nonetheless, a number of these signs are referred to in the body of the book and it is a matter of looking them up. The second appendix is simply a quick reference list of causes and differential diagnoses commonly encountered by doctors. The last is an alphabetical list of syndromes particularly relevant to chest radiology, some of which are more recognisable than others, and would probably spur a number of us to revisit our textbooks.

This guide’s main use is as a reference in the context of patient care, however the medical student would find it invaluable as a learning tool as well. On the whole this is an easy, informative read that encapsulates a rather enormous area of medicine into a concise, manageable whole.

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