



Cecil Textbook of Medicine, 22nd edition

Lee Goldman and Dennis Ausiello, editors. Single volume edition. Published by Saunders, 2004. ISBN 0-7216-9652-X. Contains 2672 pages. Price AU\$259.60

New editions of major textbooks always produce a sense of hope that we will not just see a rehash of the previous versions with a few more details. The new edition of Cecil is anything but that. It contains some significant improvements in content together with major innovations in presentation to make it more user-friendly and give greater perspective on treatment to the reader.

The content has been expanded to include new parts on genetics, immunology and inflammation, and clinical pharmacology as well as substantially expanded parts on oncology and preventative and environmental medicine. There are 23 new chapters including pertinent surgical topics such as surgical treatment of joint diseases. 129 of the 478 chapters have new authors, which refreshes the material significantly. Throughout there is an increased emphasis on the genetic basis of disease that is presented in a suitable format for the non-specialist.

Needless to say, the authors are all eminent specialists, but with rare exceptions are American. The lack of international flavour may limit this book's appeal in some locations because of differences in resourcing, culture, or medical practice.

The book is available in a single volume or as two volumes, but two volumes are preferable as the material now covers over 2,500 pages. Because of its size, the effort to improve presentation and ease of use by liberal use of colour is very welcome.

Each part can be identified by coloured page edging; and within each chapter, a coloured background has been used to highlight the sections on clinical manifestations and treatment. 1150 high quality illustrations (of clinical material) are used liberally throughout—cartoons of pathophysiological processes, reproductions of diagnostic images, and flow diagrams.

All of these features add to the reader's interest and pleasure in opening the book, but other features are somewhat irritating. The symbol Rx has been used in addition to the heading for treatment, which seems unnecessary, and some of the subheadings are bolded in fonts that are quite hard to read because of the closeness of the lettering. References are included as negative images in a red block which makes them easy to identify but rather intrusive. The overall impression of the layout is of 'busyness' rather than elegance.

Two worthwhile innovations have been included to give the physician some perspective on the treatment recommendations. Firstly, a 'grade A' notation is used to identify high level evidence (randomised controlled trials) in both the text and reference section. This is useful for estimating the strength of available evidence. Secondly, the electronic version (on CD-ROM), that comes with the book, provides an immediate link to the cited reference, and this will be updated to incorporate subsequent Grade A information as it becomes available. This should improve reader access to the scientific basis of treatment options.

Overall, this book will be a welcome addition to the shelf of many specialist physicians who want a ready update on general internal medicine, and general physicians who want an updated reference text for their own specialty. The content is excellent and the presentation is innovative. Any criticism of the 22nd edition of Cecil is really minor and more a matter of taste than substance.

This is a superb book that is a significant improvement on previous editions, and is highly recommended to serious students and practitioners of medicine.

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