

BOOK REVIEW

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Current Occupational and Environmental Medicine. *Joseph LaDou. Published by McGraw Hill Medical, 4th edition, 2007. ISBN 0-07-144313-4. Price: £37.99. 846 pp.*

This is an excellent book that aims to cover all relevant aspects of current occupational health (OH) practice. It is perhaps best seen as the US equivalent of *Hunters Diseases of Occupations*, although in a smaller format. At 846 pages, it contains a wealth of information, which although written primarily with reference to OH in the USA, contains information that will be of value to OH practitioners in the UK. Indeed, it is interesting and reassuring to note much similarity between OH principles and practice in the USA and the UK.

The book is divided into six sections covering OH in general, occupational injuries, occupational illnesses, occupational exposures, programme management and environmental health. As with all books aiming to cover such a large subject area, it offers excellent coverage of certain topics, but weaker coverage of others. Each section is subdivided into chapters, each written by a different author. The majority of authors are from the USA. Recent references and web sites are provided in every chapter.

The first section details the practice of OH in the USA including training, legal and compensation issues.

The second section on occupational injuries includes an excellent chapter on musculoskeletal conditions, with good clinical coverage including clinical signs and symptoms, differential diagnosis, investigation and treatment. Both this and the subsequent section on occupational illnesses have a strong clinical emphasis with detailed coverage of the diagnosis and treatment of a broad spectrum of occupational injuries and occupational and environmental illnesses. In my experience, this strong clinical component is something that is lacking from most other OH textbooks and will be of particular interest and use to those undertaking clinical OH work and those training in the speciality. This section also covers ergonomics and physical hazards such as noise, heat, cold, radiation, pres-

sure and vibration. I found the coverage of vibration, however, to be rather disappointing and limited.

Section 3 (occupational illnesses) has a particularly informative chapter on clinical immunology and occupational allergy. As well as a chapter on occupational lung disease there is a chapter on the often overlooked upper respiratory tract disorders, including occupational and non-occupational rhinitis. A useful and up to date chapter on occupational infections discusses topics such as severe acute respiratory syndrome, avian influenza, bioterrorism (with specific reference to the 2001 US anthrax release) and travel-associated infections.

Section 4 (occupational exposures) provides a detailed account of toxicology subdivided into metals, chemicals, solvents, gases and pesticides. The chapter on pesticides is particularly well presented and thorough.

In the fifth section (programme management), the psychological aspects of work including work stress, shift work and organizational and individual stress prevention approaches are covered. In view of this area now accounting for a significant and often majority proportion of many OH professionals' time, a more in-depth coverage of the area might have been expected. Suitable references, however, provide indirectly for this and overall the chapter provides a good summary of this topic.

The final section on environmental health provides good coverage of topics such as outdoor air pollution, building-associated illness, hazardous waste, industrial emissions and water pollution. Last but not least is an appendix, which includes a concise introduction to statistics and epidemiology—on its own providing very useful coverage of this topic.

This is a well-priced and useful book that deserves a place on the shelf of all OH physicians. Once available it is likely to be referred to frequently.

Rating

☆☆☆☆ (Buy, read and keep)

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