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Book reviews

Diagnosis of the Orthodontic Patient (1998)

F. McDonald and A. J. Ireland
Publisher: Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK
Price: £19.95
ISBN: 0-19-262889-5

If communication is the art of being understood, this book communicates well. Like the story-tellers, the raconteurs of old, the authors have clearly kissed the Blarney stone. They set out to tell the story of orthodontic diagnosis and succeed admirably. The vocabulary is simple yet elegant and students commencing clinical work or those whose first language is not English will have no difficulty in comprehending the messages. That said, the style is somewhat wordy, a little prolix for my taste, and some students might be deterred by opening the book at some places and finding two pages of unrelieved text. They will, however, appreciate the summaries at the end of each chapter and the case studies at the end of the book.

A notable exception to the uncontaminated vocabulary is the reference to 'snake oil salesmen' which leaps out of page 119 and pokes the reader in the eye. I presume they sell a lubricant for sidewinder springs.

This is a very British book, a worthy successor to W. J. B. Houston's similar title written more than 20 years ago. I felt led along a familiar path through the development of occlusion, ideal occlusion, classification of malocclusion, dental base relationships, soft tissues, etc., and I was glad to see that the usefulness of removable appliances is not denigrated.

Chapters on the temporomandibular joint, function, and dynamic occlusion are useful reminders that the masticatory apparatus exists to be used, and sections on patient and parent interview, consent, and modification of treatment plans in the light of age, and dental and periodontal pathology move the treatment philosophies into the real world. The rather precise use of the middle and index fingers recommended for assessing dental base relationship must depend on the length of the individual operator's fingers, and may be a reminder that orthodontists are born and not made.

On behalf of all those who have ever submitted a paper to the *EJO* I sharpened a pencil to a fine point and scrutinized the text for printer's errors. I could find only a few, notably a switch in sides of the unerupted canine in figure 8.9 which is said to be 'distant' to the incisor apices and the 'ante-gonal' notch in the legend of figure 4.11. In front of what is an ante-gonal notch? Answers, on a postcard please, to Fraser McDonald.

Joking aside, this is a very useful book which, in general, is traditional and in the section on evidence-based practice is very topical. It is excellent value for money and can be thoroughly recommended to the target groups of general practitioners, undergraduate and early post-graduate students. It has an easy, flowing style and will make an enjoyable read for orthodontists at all levels.

Andrew Richardson

X-ray Microanalysis for Biologists (1997)

Author: Alice Warley
Publishers: Portland Press, London
Price: £39.50
ISBN: 1 85578 054 2

This is the 16th volume in the series *Practical Methods in Electron Microscopy*. The book describes a method, electron-probe X-ray microanalysis, for those biologists who wish to determine the elemental composition of specimens. There is an interesting mix of the theoretical background necessary for understanding the method, and practical advice is given for the whole process of X-ray microanalysis, from the equipment needed to tissue processing and analysis of results.

While interesting and important details are given, it is clear that one book cannot cover the whole topic and, in many instances, the author refers to other sources for more details. A great deal of the text is used to describe what could go wrong. This publication provides a good understanding of the limitations of the methods related to electron-probe X-ray microanalysis and there is helpful advice on making choices between different methods. It can be recommended to those biologists who intend to use this method to analyse specimens.

Tuomo Kantomaa