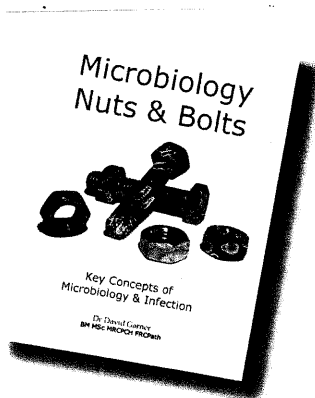


Microbiology Nuts & Bolts: Key Concepts of Microbiology & Infection

Dr David Garner

CreateSpace Independent
Publishing Platform, 2013,
£27.99, 288 pp

ISBN 978 1 148412 391 1



Microbiology Nuts & Bolts is a very interesting and useful resource for those who want to have a better understanding of microbiology. The book is pocket sized and so can be carried around as a constantly available resource. It is suitable for trainees in any specialty, including those in microbiology, and would also be a useful resource to students. The layout of the book is such that it can either be read cover to cover, be dipped into to look at the areas in which you are most interested or used as a resource to look up information relating to microbiology, infection control, cases of infection or use of antimicrobials on the ward, as and when required.

The book attempts to strip down microbiology to the basic and most relevant pieces of information that are required for the management of patients. Of course, it is always very difficult to deliver only the most relevant pieces of information on any subject, and it is worth remembering that any piece of information – even the most obscure – can be relevant in the right circumstance. In addition, the book is useful for basic information, but will not enable the reader to manage some more complicated infections. This is not a criticism of the book – just a recognition of its limitations. Examples of some of the more-difficult-to-manage infections, and those in which management strategies are rapidly evolving (such that the book will become quickly out of date), include hepatitis C and MDR/XDR TB. The book is not designed to be a definitive resource on everything microbiological, but this must be borne in mind when it is being used.

The book is divided into six sections: basic concepts, microbiology, infection control, clinical scenarios, antibiotics and emergencies. The section on emergencies is particularly useful. It has a number of algorithms and management pathways to guide the management of common microbiology emergencies. A number of these emergencies are also covered by national guidance, available on the web. In the long term, it may be more useful to access some of these guidelines directly from the web, where they are constantly updated in line with changing epidemiology and antibiotic resistance. However, we are not yet in an era where these guidelines can be easily accessed by everybody at the point of patient contact and this hand-held resource will be useful in such a setting.

Each section is set out very methodically and concisely, making the book very easy to use. For example, each antibiotic has information on mechanism of action, mechanism of resistance, pharmacology and pharmacodynamics, spectrum of activity, cautions and contraindications, side effects and

monitoring. Because of the layout, it is easy to rapidly find the information that you are looking for in any particular situation.

The book also contains a number of other useful bits of information including many useful charts, e.g. A-Z of microbiology tests by specimen type, microbiology results by specimen type, isolation priority and infection control precautions, paediatric and neonatal antibiotic doses, adult sepsis golden hour management flow chart, table of antibiotic spectrum of activity, timing of samples and levels for therapeutic drug monitoring – and sections on hints and tips and common mistakes that are easy to read and contain useful information.

In summary, this is a well-written book that is concise, well set out and easy to use. It contains a wealth of useful information and is a valuable resource for those interested in improving their knowledge of microbiology. The book is practical in its size (it is pocket size), layout (information is easy to find) and content (the book attempts to contain only the most relevant information that is necessary for patient management). I would recommend this book to trainees in any specialty including microbiology and to students wishing to improve their knowledge of microbiology.

Brendan Healy
Microbiogydd Ymgynghorol
Consultant in Microbiology and Infectious Diseases

Born in the NHS

Wendy French and Jane Kirwan
Hippocrates Press, 2013, £12, 240 pp
ISBN 978 0 957 2712 2

According to the foreword, this book was a response to government reforms of the NHS mooted in 2010:

“As more people become aware of the damage that is being done by privatising our health service, we decided it was important to put our personal account on record and, because we are poets, use poetry. This book isn’t a polemic about the NHS but our personal impressionistic account, drawing on aspects that have touched our experience.”

Avid readers of this journal wishing to find the holy grail sooner rather than later will find what they are looking for under ‘P’. However, they are advised not to limit their reading to this section of the book, but to follow the complete trajectory from ‘Abortion’ to ‘Zygote’. The fact that the book is divided alphabetically may suggest that it be dipped in and out of, but it actually reads better read from cover to cover first and then dipped into later.

My expectation was that this was going to be a book about the history of the NHS, written in poetry. Luckily, the NHS is more of a starting point and the book includes both prose and poetry. There is no index, but if there were it would include such tasty nuggets as ‘Czech soldier having head blown off fighting for red army in WW2’, ‘Mexican day of the dead’, ‘HIV in Zimbabwe’ and ‘Invention of contraception’. The authors say that they “have

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added material from outside the UK when it seemed to shed additional light".

The poetry is presented in a specific context and so is more transparent than if it were read in isolation. The contrast between prose and poetry is brought out by the way the poems seem to present the essence of what may have just been described in prose. Whilst the book is written by two 'voices', clearly labelled, it was not necessary to keep track of this whilst reading the book. We learn that one writer is married to a pathologist and one writer has worked abroad, but it is not necessary to separate the two writers out in the mind's eye.

This reviewer comes from a similar background and is of similar vintage to the writers (who "come from medical families and have spent their lives working for the National Health Service") so not much of the content was a surprise, but it may well contain all sorts of revelations for those who are young enough to take the NHS so much for granted that they are happy to risk its demise. As for 'readability', anyone who has read *Dr Zhivago* studiously ignoring the poetry will be surprised at how much they enjoy the poetry presented as it is in this book.

Dr Carole A Cotter

Lay member of the former Lay Advisory Committee

Engaging Patients in Healthcare

Angela Coulter

Open University Press, 2011,

£24.99, 224 pp

ISBN 978 0 335 24271 9

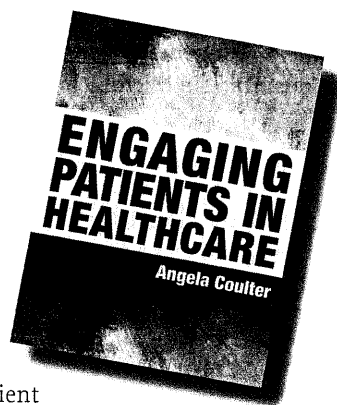
Angela Coulter's book, *Engaging Patients in Healthcare*, is a concise and thought-provoking text. The author herself has worked in a number of high-level positions that deal with patient involvement, so is well placed to approach the subject.

As noted by the author, public and patient involvement (PPI) is a phrase that is commonly used in the modern healthcare arena. However, as the book moves along – following a distinctly and succinctly guided pattern, involving to-the-point summaries and highlighted key points, as well as a plethora of research in which to ground her ideas – the reader can see that there is so much more to build on from the foundations that have been constructed around PPI.

The text moves swiftly from covering currently policy and current care programmes to outlining factors, motivators and areas that could be improved, such as raising the critical importance of delivering a better 'health education' to the public.

In a world where, at the first sign of any medical trouble, a good percentage of patients run to their closest internet-capable device and search for information, then create their own interpretations and conclusions, ideas like the ones put forward by Ms Coulter are grounded in some excellent foundations.

The book serves as a good introduction to the process and



share not only with doctors, nurses, but with pharmaceutical companies and other healthcare-related entities. The myriad tables concisely sum up important factors or sides to the argument that is being presented in each chapter, with clear and easy-to-follow bullet points and other visual clues.

The author highlights unique and niche ideas that could be developed upon, such as private and social entrepreneurs taking service developments into their hands, e.g. the case with Bromley By Bow Centre and creating a 'bottom-up service development' that now benefits a relatively large community. By highlighting such cases, Ms Coulter builds on and suggests pathways in which communities, patients and the healthcare system could build and work together to improve patient care. The author covers necessary bases such as the importance of research and how it is conducted (and by whom), as well as truly getting at the heart of how and where patients want to be involved in their healthcare, and caring for patients in unique and personalised fashion.

For those looking at an overview of the current state of affairs regarding patient involvement in healthcare and how this field could be further developed, this comprehensive text is an excellent place to start.

Dr Laszlo Igali

Consultant Histopathologist

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Pandemic Survival: It's why you're alive

Ann Love and Jane Drake, illustrated by Bill Slavin

Tundra, 2013, £16.99, 128 pp

ISBN 978 1 770 49268 4

Pandemic Survival is all about how the human race has evolved alongside infectious diseases. It is a slim book set out in the style of a modern textbook, with colourful illustrations and panels for anecdotes, 'fact-erias' and short stories. Starting from ancient times and going all the way through to modern times, it documents all the different pandemics and epidemics that have afflicted the human race.

It is difficult to pinpoint who the target audience is for this book. The obvious group is teenagers with an interest in science. The authors have not held back when it comes to the gory reality of the different diseases that humankind has faced during our time on earth. The writing is largely accessible and engaging, with plenty of colour to keep the reader interested. Having said that, as a trainee microbiologist a long way from my teens, I found this book easy to read and enjoyed most of it. I would certainly recommend it to others with an interest in medical history, especially if you are interested in getting teenagers to engage with science.

This book is well written, personable, informative and, as I already mentioned, engaging. The illustrations are fun and keep the book light. The format, with the panels and asides, helps maintain flow and interest.

The most annoying thing about this book is the 'Canadianisms' (not 'Americanisms', as the authors are from Canada). Everything is spelt in American English and there are a lot of North American references, which seem out of place in