

### VisualDx (online digital dermatology atlas)

Multiple authors, a limited version of the VisualDx is available free on Medscape as the Primary Care Atlas of Dermatology. A full version of VisualDx is licensed as a yearly subscription and a trial version is available for 14 days on a CD-ROM, pricing is based on the number of users, Rochester, NY, Logical Images, Inc, www.logicalimages.com, 2001.

Logical Images' intelligent VisualDx atlas for the diagnosis of fever, bioterrorism-related rash, and adult rashes stands above all other digital atlases in the field. Its collection of images is of the highest quality, and its search features are novel and effective.

Using VisualDx, one can search for the diagnosis of a rash by appearance, location, and symptoms. Those who are not dermatologists can access dermatological knowledge by fixing on icons denoting, for instance, a flat lesion or purpuric lesion. These icons show what happens when you press on a lesion—a blanchable area gets less red when pressed. Selecting the purpura icon reveals a visual differential diagnosis of thumbnail digital images of purpuric diseases. Images can also be searched for by anatomic distribution (eg, acral). These search features make VisualDx a more useful diagnostic tool, especially for nondermatologists, than the excellent *University of Erlangen Dermatology Online Atlas*.

The collection of images in VisualDx is extensive. It has more pictures of small pox than I have seen in any other source. And it provides 84 images of granuloma annulare. Images can be grouped alphabetically and by severity (all rashes that are emergencies [eg, anthrax or toxic shock] can be grouped). When a particular disease is selected by double-clicking, diagnostic and therapeutic information is generated regarding the

condition. Included in this information are clinical pearls that help the reader to distinguish similar conditions from one another (eg, eschar of anthrax, spider bite, and rickettsial pox).

By paying an annual license fee, VisualDx can be accessed over the Web or on a CD-ROM. I have a high-speed connection, so I do not know how it would run on a 56 k connection. A more abbreviated, free version of VisualDx with fewer features, is available on Medscape's dermatology page.

VisualDx is part of the vanguard of diagnostic aids that will bring not merely dermatological knowledge, but dermatological understanding to all places with computers and modems. This atlas points the way toward the future of utilizing images to facilitate diagnosis; its interactive nature makes it a truly helpful tool for enhancing the health of patients.

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**Utility Index:** Important  
**Production Quality:** Outstanding  
**Primary Readership:** Physicians (nondermatologists), clinical dermatologists, subspecialists in dermatology (dermatopathologists, pediatric dermatologists, etc), dermatologists-in-training, and dermatologic surgeons  
**Value for Money:** Good buy

### Surgical Anatomy of the Head and Neck



edited by Parviz Janfaza, Joseph B. Nadol, Jr, Robert J. Galla, Richard L. Fabian, and William W. Montgomery, 908 pp, with illus, \$349, ISBN 0-683-06302-2, Philadelphia, Pa, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2001.

Through history, advances in anatomy have been the foundation for subsequent improvements in sur-

gical technique. Galen's theories of human anatomy, only partly informed by evidence from cadaveric dissection, both inspired and limited surgeons from Roman times until the late Middle Ages. Empiricism's eventual rebirth enabled the contributions of surgeons, like Al-Zahrawi in Moorish Spain, who appreciated the importance of anatomy. In 1543, *De Humanis Corporis Fabrica* was published by Vesalius and became the first complete anatomy textbook. This doubtless facilitated the subsequent innovations of others, including Gaspare Tagliacozzi (1545-1599), the so-called father of plastic and cutaneous surgery (eg, flap and graft reconstructions).

*Surgical Anatomy of the Head and Neck* is an unusually competent synthesis of anatomic knowledge that is of great practical help to the surgeon. The book is divided into chapters by region, and subdivided further by subregion. For example, the chapter entitled "Nasal Cavities and Paranasal Sinuses" has 8 parts. One of these is "the external nose," which is in turn composed of "anatomic landmarks," "nasal bony framework," "nasal cartilages," "nasal septum," "lobule of the nose," "muscles of the nose," "blood supply of the external nose," and "nerve supply to the external nose." Each of the lowest level subsections is keyed to an adjacent anatomic illustration by bullet points. All the major structures in that area are described with concise sentences explaining their location, size, function, and other relevant details.

The organization of the book makes it easy to use. A surgeon interested in a particular topic can easily find the relevant section or subsection, and if specific data are required, the index can pinpoint these. While not a small book, *Surgical Anatomy of the Head and Neck* delivers an enormous amount of information in an uncluttered manner by virtue of an economy of language and disciplined presentation.

Artistic renderings of anatomy provide the backbone of the book. These drawings, often in full color, but occasionally in 2-tone or black and white, are typically half a page in size, and probably outnumber the pages of text. They are a remarkable achievement, beautifully crafted by an illustrator's illustrator. The temptation to compress every detail into each image has been successfully resisted. Color is used when it helps, but omitted when it would be unnecessary or distracting. Similarly, some illustrations are simple and some complex. Form is chosen to enhance function, and there is no slavish adherence to any type of orientation or view, and no compulsion to make the drawings look uniform.

A successful text device is frequent shaded boxes labeled "surgical implications." These highlight the clinical relevance of key structures being discussed. Another bonus is the final chapter, "Regional and Free Flaps and Gracilis for Reconstruction in the Head and Neck." In this, the authors review the anatomic considerations that must guide specific reconstructions.

Much of the anatomy discussed in this book will be only tangentially relevant to dermatologic surgeons. Deep structures of the ear and midface are rarely involved in Mohs repairs or excisions. However, sometimes invasive tumors go further than expected and their removal may impinge on structures well beyond the skin. Dermatologic surgeons should be able to cope with these challenges. For this, as their predecessors in history discovered, an understanding of the relevant anatomy is indispensable. Better to know too much than not enough, and greater anatomic expertise can only encourage further innovation in technique. This book, written by otolaryngologists, is a welcome addition to the surgical dermatologist's library.

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**Utility Index:** Indispensable

**Production Quality:** Outstanding

**Primary Readership:** Dermatologic surgeons

**Value for Money:** Expensive but worthwhile investment

## Skin Cancer



by Arthur J. Sober and Frank G. Haluska, 350 pp, with illus, \$149, ISBN 1-55009-108-5, Hamilton, Ontario, BC Decker Inc, 2001.

This is 1 of more than 20 books in the American Cancer Society's Atlas of Clinical Oncology Series. Both editors are at Harvard Medical School, where they recruited most of the chapter authors. The publisher, BC Decker Inc, is a newly prominent boutique house based in Canada that has recently taken an interest in dermatology. As with the other texts from BC Decker Inc, the hardcover *Skin Cancer* is sold as a unit with a CD-ROM version.

Ambitious as its title, this book discusses the whole breadth of cutaneous malignancies, from diagnosis to treatment, and basic science to clinical observation. Eighteen chapters are grouped in 4 categories: basic concepts, clinical presentation, management, and prevention. Organization has obviously been given thought, with the editors cognizant of the discipline required to cover the subject in 300 pages.

In the first section, there is an excellent chapter on epidemiology of skin cancer by Martin Weinstein, and an equally valuable chapter on risk assessment that features a diagrammatic representation of the "life of a mole." A chapter on the genetics of skin cancer is the solitary foray into basic science in the book, and is well done.

The section on clinical presentation allots chapters to melanoma, basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, cutaneous lymphoma, Merkel cell carcinoma, and Kaposi sarcoma. Curiously, while Merkel cell carcinoma merits a whole chapter, other uncommon cutaneous malignancies are discussed collectively in a single, excessively short chapter. One half to 1 page each is devoted to angiosarcoma, atypical fibroxanthoma, dermatofibrosarcoma protuberans, and microcystic adnexal carcinoma. The chapter on basal cell carcinoma could be more extensive, with a better selection of clinical photographs.

Chapters on skin cancer management comprise about half the book. Within this section, attention is heavily weighted toward the treatment of melanoma. Six of the 9 chapters discuss melanoma, with the remaining chapters on treatment of nonmelanoma skin cancer, radiation therapy, and surgical treatment of primary cutaneous melanoma. Techniques of dubious merit in the management of melanoma are discussed exhaustively, but the emphasis cannot be criticized given the importance of melanoma within dermatology and the dearth of highly effective therapies for advanced disease. Thus, there are separate chapters on adjuvant therapy in melanoma, immunotherapy for melanoma, and melanoma chemotherapies, as well as an entire chapter on lymphatic mapping and sentinel lymph node biopsy, which are considered experimental procedures by many. The chapter on radiation therapy is appropriately brief, given the exceedingly few instances when radiation is the optimal intervention for skin cancer.

A concluding chapter on prevention by Robin Marks provides an authoritative overview. Dermatoscopy, missing from the melanoma chapters, is defined here.

This book has many commendable features. Many large, crisp color photographs and well-conceived diagrams are liberally dispersed throughout. Four or more illustrations per page are not uncommon, while 2 are the norm. Combined with the legible typeface and intuitive subheadings in bold, the ubiquity of color and explanatory figures makes this an inviting and accessible reference book that verges on being an atlas.

Additionally, the book is indeed comprehensive. If nonmelanoma cancer is treated slightly cursorily, this is understandable given that so many other, more esoteric topics must be discussed as well. Individually, most of the chapters are a pleasure to read. Well written, clear, and concise, they are distilled summaries of the type difficult to find in major dermatology texts, which can sacrifice simplicity for absolute comprehensiveness. Moreover, some of the contents of this book are surprisingly rare in other reference books, in any

form. For instance, given the controversy over the usefulness of lymphatic mapping and sentinel node biopsy, it is extremely helpful to read how exactly these procedures are done. There is a similarly adept, visually striking explanation of Mohs micrographic surgery that carefully delineates the mapping, marking, and processing of tissue. Cutaneous lymphoma, an evolving and complex field understood poorly by many dermatologists, is covered admirably. Taken together, the chapters on cutaneous lymphoma and treatment of primary cutaneous lymphomas comprise a freestanding mini-book that is easily digested by a novice. Finally, while few dermatologists in the United States would direct the surgical or medical treatment of advanced melanoma, they should be aware of the standards of care and the promise of emerging therapies, detailed here.

*Skin Cancer* is less dense than some other textbooks on skin cancer. For comparison, Friedman et al's *Cancer of the Skin* and Maloney and Miller's *Cutaneous Oncology* are more in depth and heavily referenced. But much of the charm of *Skin Cancer* is its brevity, clarity, and user-friendliness, which are unparalleled. The reader interested in detailed discussions of diagnostic and therapeutic controversies pertaining to unusual tumors had best look elsewhere. On the other hand, readers who want to learn about the current clinical management of melanoma, and to a lesser extent, nonmelanoma skin cancer and cutaneous lymphoma, could do no better.

This is a basic, benchmark book of value to dermatologists, oncologists, surgeons, and dermatology residents, as well as motivated internists and medical students. Probably all dermatologists who treat skin cancer should consider obtaining and reading it. As only 1 review copy was provided by the publisher, 1 of the 2 reviewers will purchase another copy for himself.

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**Utility Index:** Important  
**Production Quality:** Excellent

**Primary Readership:** Clinical dermatologists, subspecialists in dermatology (dermatopathologists, pediatric dermatologists, etc), dermatologists-in-training, and dermatologic surgeons

**Value for Money:** Bargain

### **Dermatopathology in Systemic Disease**

by Bruce R. Smoller and Thomas D. Horn, 401 pp, \$159, ISBN 0-19-513038-3, New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2001.

This is a 401-page book devoted to the study of systemic processes in which there is significant cutaneous involvement, with particular emphasis on the description of histologic features. The authors classify those diseases in 7 parts: I, diseases involving skin and multiple internal organs; II, diseases involving the skin and limited internal organs; III, metabolic and storage; IV, infectious diseases; V, drug-induced diseases; VI, internal malignancies; and VII, pediatric diseases. Within each part, diseases are further organized into easily recognizable groups such as cardiac, renal, or musculoskeletal diseases. Regarding each disease, there is a description of epidemiology, clinical cutaneous features, associated disorders, histologic features, special studies, and etiopathogenesis.

This original approach to cutaneous lesions provides an easy, quick review of such important processes such as lupus erythematosus or diseases of the nervous system with cutaneous manifestations. The book is also very helpful by providing the systemic description of epidemiology, clinical cutaneous features, etc. The tables are printed with a blue background to allow easy reading. Another significant plus is the iconography, with high-quality, color pictures throughout the book.

In any work there are features that will be considered as deficiencies by some readers. The book only lists the differential diagnoses without any mention of important diagnostic features (probably to reduce the length of the book). Some of the diseases may be difficult to place in one or another chapter. For ex-

ample, Langerhans cell granulomatosis and lymphocyte recovery eruption are listed within hematologic malignancies (chapter 10); a more suitable title for that chapter may have been "Hematologic Processes" rather than "Malignancies." Similarly, post-transplant lymphoproliferative disorders, which are usually classified with immunosuppression and solid-organ transplantation, are listed within the topic of renal disease (chapter 8). Erythema annulare centrifugum, id reaction, and erythema nodosum are listed under fungal and algal diseases (chapter 19), although they are sometimes associated with other infectious processes such as bacterial infections. Some of the diseases are not included in the classic subgroup (eg, lupus erythematosus has a chapter by itself, separate from connective tissue disorder). However, although the placement of these diseases may surprise some readers, the excellent index will help one locate a particular disease.

In summary, this is an excellent book that should be part of the library of dermatopathologists and any physician with interest in cutaneous manifestations of systemic diseases.

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**Utility Index:** Important  
**Production Quality:** Excellent  
**Primary Readership:** Physicians (nondermatologists), clinical dermatologists, subspecialists in dermatology, dermatologists-in-training, and dermatologic surgeons  
**Value for Money:** Good buy

#### **Submissions**

The *Archives of Dermatology* reviews books, journals, CD-ROMs, Web-based products, and other information sources of interest to dermatologists. We welcome the submission of review copies, which should be sent to the Book and New Media Reviews Section, *Archives of Dermatology*, 25 Boylston St, Suite 212, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467. Questions regarding the review process may be directed to the section editor at murad@alam.com.