
This pocket book by Dr Venkatesh and colleagues is designed to aid ICU trainees in the analysis and interpretation of the large quantity and variety of data presented to them in the day-to-day practice of critical care medicine. It is primarily aimed at the trainee undertaking the Australian Intensive Care Fellowship examination, but clearly a wider audience could be targeted.

The authors choose to use case scenarios to present data under a variety of different headings. This approach seems a good method to tackle data interpretation and analysis but there are some shortfalls. The scenarios often cover quite obscure diagnoses (i.e. rhinocerebral mucomycosis), and sometimes they fail to present enough case history and data to allow some of the more obscure diagnosis to be reached. It occasionally feels that the authors have made the mistake of writing the questions with the diagnosis in mind rather than presenting the information required to make that diagnosis. Undoubtedly, the case mix that the authors see in their practice differs from European centres as can be attested to by the microbiology section. It could be argued, however, that the European intensive care specialist still requires an awareness of tropical diseases and their presentation.

The target audience of the book is the ICU trainee and it would be quite useful to this group. It offers a less-dry alternative to many of the existing textbooks on this subject matter. I am unsure whether trainees will carry it as a pocket book. I think the ICU specialist could use the book for revision of more obscure conditions that they will see on occasion in their practice, and could also gain from revision of the more common conditions. It would be a useful aid on which to base clinical scenarios during teaching rounds.

At £21, the book offers reasonable value for money to the individual, but would be of most value to an ICU departmental library.

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