BOOK REVIEWS


The current practice of cytopathology includes the performance of fine-needle aspiration (FNA) biopsy of superficial masses and of organs, such as the thyroid, salivary glands, and mammary glands, and interpretation of the biopsy specimens. Because of the need for radiographic guidance in deep-seated organs, superficial masses constitute virtually all cases that pathologists perform FNA on or see in their own clinics.

Until recently, pathologists had to consult individual monographs on specific organs or large texts encompassing the totality of cytology to locate information to solve everyday dilemmas in superficial aspirations. No more. A very useful text-atlas, Fine Needle Aspiration of Subcutaneous Organs and Masses has consolidated FNA of the breast, thyroid, salivary glands, and lymph nodes and subcutaneous masses and cysts. Just the time this volume saves by not having to search in different sources for those problems that pertain to the FNA clinic is worth the purchase price. Since adding this book to my library, I have been surprised by the number of times I have consulted it and by the usefulness of the information. The two senior coauthors were fortunate in the collaborators they secured to produce seven well-balanced and nicely illustrated chapters.


Review of the compact disk (CD-ROM), Atlas of Skin Pigmented Skin Lesions, requires examining the computer-dependent medium and this atlas’s content. The author of a CD-ROM begins with a disadvantage. Every reader is familiar and comfortable with the printed paper medium of journals and textbooks. Books are portable and readily accessible and have great random access (“page-flipping”) ease of use. It is not as convenient to take a CD-ROM (with attached computer) to check some feature of interest when signing out cases or to stroll through the hall with a CD-ROM to debate the description of a lesion with colleagues. A successful computer-based publication must be an exceptionally user-friendly (intuitive), interactive, and attractive package. With great respect for the obvious effort involved in producing this CD-ROM, I am not sure that the author has achieved these goals.

For me, the table of contents (“Menu”) is somewhat confusing at the main heading and subheading levels. The first menu is divided into “Disease Atlas,” “Feature Atlas,” “References,” “Feature Definition,” and “Disease Definition.” A split screen with definition text running next to the atlas pictures and access to references from all text and image screens would be more coherent. There is a link from the atlas pages to corresponding definition pages, but the reverse is not available. References are not accessible directly from the main text area in the definitions sections. The references are not numbered or otherwise linked to specific statements in the text. The statement that up to six mitoses per square millimeter may be seen in a Spitz nevus needs better referencing, if it is to be made at all.

The feature-based organization is useful and similar to the familiar pattern approach for inflammatory dermatoses. The meaning of “high-level concepts” is not easy to understand. For example, the description of benign nevus cells appearing to extend into lymphovascular spaces is clear, but in what way is “lymphatic invasion” a high-level concept? “Epidermal hyperplasia and hyperkeratosis” could be logically dealt with in the “Epidermis” section rather than in the high-level concepts section. “Stroma appearance,” “stroma eosinophilic fibroplasia,” “stroma lamellar fibroplasia,” fibrosis of the stroma,” and “stroma melanin pigment” are in a section titled “Lesional Stroma.” The second and third are surely subsets of the fourth, which in turn is a subset of the first. Where should one look? Could these not all be included in the separate “Dermis” section?

The two initial chapters, on biopsy and imaging techniques, set the stage for separate chapters on individual organs. Each written by recognized experts in the field, the chapters are arranged along a similar structure that includes tissue correlations, differential diagnosis, and the use of ancillary techniques without reaching esoteric proportions. The chapter on FNA of the breast by Andrea Dawson is particularly helpful because it describes various entities in crisp clear language and reiterates the salient cytologic features in bullet-style tables. The chapter on lymph nodes succeeds in blending good cytologic descriptions with the latest in the realm of surface markers and other ancillary techniques. This chapter also provides a good table translating the complex classification of lymphomas into the cytologic equivalent without committing the sin of oversimplification. The illustrations are all high quality except a few DiffQuik pictures that suffer from overstaining.

Overall, I found the book excellent, and the coauthors should be congratulated on their felicitous idea to produce a slender tome that should be a must in every pathologist-operated FNA clinic. The book should be of interest not only to practicing cytopathologists and surgical pathologists, but also to residents and cytotechnology students, as well as to clinicians who perform or use FNA in their daily practices.

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