

Murtagh's general practice fifth edition

John Murtagh

Australia: McGraw-Hill
Australia Pty Ltd, 2011

ISBN 978 0070 285 385,
\$175.00

'Murtagh's general practice' is a comprehensive textbook on general practice which is an essential resource for medical students, registrars and GPs. Author Professor John Murtagh is an eminent and respected clinician, academic and teacher who brings a wealth of experience in rural and metropolitan general practice and teaching to this publication.

Following several chapters on the basics of general practice, Murtagh proceeds to a systematic approach in analysing symptoms as they would present in practice. This unique approach to analysing symptoms, which many of us who have had the privilege of being taught by Professor Murtagh remember him by, is one which we



integrate into practice on a daily basis. The causes of symptoms, where appropriate, have been classified into 'probability diagnosis', 'serious disorders not to be missed', 'pitfalls', 'the seven masquerades checklist' and 'is the patient trying to tell me something?' which mirrors the focus of the text on common, significant, preventable and treatable conditions.

In this book, Murtagh touches on all of the five domains of general practice, making this a well rounded book and not one merely concentrating on knowledge and skills.

Of particular help to the busy GP or registrar studying for exams, is the use of key facts and practice tips displayed in point form, and the diagnostic triads which help discriminate between one disease and another. Add this to the systematic display of information throughout, the well laid out format and a writing style which is easy to read, all of which make this textbook a pleasure to read.

The fifth edition of this publication has been updated throughout with some extra references

utilised in many of the chapters and there are new chapters on infections of the central nervous system, refugee health and colloquial expressions used in medicine, and extra information on infections and infestations in the returned traveller. Many chapters now also have cross references to patient education information presented in one of the author's other publications. Compared with the changes between the third and fourth editions, there are less changes between the fourth and fifth editions, as so for the discerning or cost conscious purchaser, the fourth edition may suffice and meet their needs.

I particularly liked Murtagh's injection of humour into this book in the chapter which presented caricatures of doctors in the community such as Dr N Zyme and Dr I Knowall!

Overall, I would highly recommend this book, and it is well complemented by the author's other publications: 'Murtagh's Patient Education fifth edition' and 'John Murtagh's practice tips fifth edition'.

Catherine Dodgshun
Melbourne, Vic

A guide to evidence based integrative and complementary medicine

Vicki Kotsirilos,
Luis Vitetta, Avni Sali

Australia: Elsevier
Australia, 2011

ISBN 978 0729 539 081,
\$88.20

This textbook is written by three of the most renowned doctors of integrative medicine in Australia. The undertaking of such a book is to be commended and will surely be the forefront textbook for this subject. It is a great achievement by all the contributors.

This book is set out in a fairly standard way, approaching each different condition. The themes are broad; some are disease based such as epilepsy or multiple sclerosis and others are systems based such as musculoskeletal disorders and skin. The topics cover an integrative approach which includes dietary intervention, lifestyle factors, mind-body approaches, acupuncture and other energetic treatments, supplements and herbs. For each



intervention the evidence is appraised, notated and the level of evidence is also given. This book tries to cover many different areas and some more informed readers may find the information given at times a little brief.

The book presents a vast number of complementary options that are available to the GP or specialists and allows the practitioner to strengthen their own repertoire in a safe and evidenced based way. I think many doctors who may consider themselves quite mainstream would feel comfortable with this textbook and therefore allow themselves to explore a range of different methods in order to help their patients heal. Medicine does seem to be getting more and more complex, with stress, obesity, pollutants, and toxins all playing a part in the unprecedented rise of some diseases. This book allows us all to listen more effectively and implement more confidently a wide range of modalities within our scope of healing.

This book is a great resource for all GPs to refer to when patients either present using a range of

complementary medicines for which they can refer to for an up-to-date evidence base, and also for GPs and specialists to refer to when the patient has had all sinister pathology excluded yet remains unwell. This book can provide the doctor with a different approach to enable them to help the patient pursue either together or with a referral to another provider.

General practitioners sit in such a privileged position in our work which allows us to listen and witness some incredible stories of resilience and wonder in people's lives. We are all aware of both the uses and limitations of pharmaceutical medications. This comprehensive textbook allows us to be supported with an evidence base to help us explore integrative modalities to our practice. These modalities are at times common sense, and at others mind broadening and challenging for some. Yet what it does help to affirm is the incredible complexity and wonder that occurs when the human body heals itself, and we as doctors can be witness to, and facilitators of, this powerful and awe inspiring journey.

Michelle Woolhouse
Melbourne, Vic