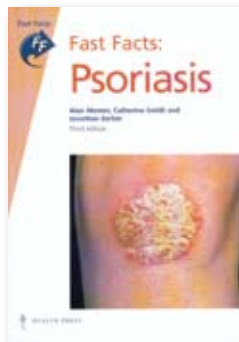


Fast Facts: Psoriasis 3rd edition

Alan Menter, Catherine Smith,
Jonathan Barker

Oxford, United Kingdom:
Health Press, 2008

ISBN 978 190 3734 032, \$28.00



■ **If you want to know about psoriasis then this is the book for you. The authors have done an excellent job at condensing the large amount of information on psoriasis into 100 pages of easy reading.**

Psoriasis is a problem that commonly presents in general practice. It may be relatively trivial for some patients but it may be a major problem, both medically and socially, for others. Chapter 2 (clinical presentation) provides very important information on comorbidities including psoriatic arthritis, autoimmune disease, cancer and cardiovascular disease. This should reinforce to readers the nontrivial nature of psoriasis.

This book has very good photos, including photos on conditions that may appear to be psoriasis initially. Chapter 4 (general management) and chapter 5 (topical therapy) provide a very good overview of the aims of treatment and the options available. This information would allow a general practitioner to treat many of their patients with milder psoriasis quite successfully and monitor them for comorbidities in the long term.

The next three chapters outline options for systemic treatment for more severe psoriasis. This is most likely to be done through a dermatologist but the information provided in this book is a very good summary of these treatments, which are also used in several other medical conditions.

The penultimate chapter 9 (psoriatic arthritis) provides clear diagnostic criteria on this form of arthritis which is often missed.

Online information has its place but I still love books. This is definitely one to have on the shelf, especially for registrars, but also for any general practitioner with an interest in skin disease (hopefully all). Dermatologists should also enjoy it.

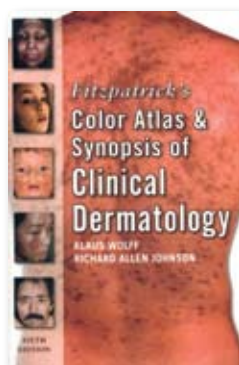
Philip Clarke
Launceston, Tas

Fitzpatrick's Color Atlas and Synopsis of Clinical Dermatology 6th edition

Klaus Wolff, Richard Allen Johnson

USA: McGraw-Hill, 2009

ISBN 978 0 07159 9757, \$130.00



■ **Speaking of weird skin stuff... Fitzpatrick's Color Atlas and Synopsis of Clinical Dermatology is full of it! It is one of those books that completely gross out normal people but doctors just love. There are about 900 excellent clinical photographs of skin conditions, ranging from variations of common disorders such as eczema and acne, to the rare, extreme things I'm really glad I don't have. This is a book I love to have on my shelf at the practice because, when faced with a weird skin rash, nodule, lump or bump, I can usually find one that is similar in the book, accompanied by a brief summary of what, if anything, needs to be done about it.**

The text is relatively brief, but includes the essential information: epidemiology, pathogenesis, what to look for on history and examination; differential diagnosis; investigations if indicated; course and prognosis and management. This sixth edition has 300 new images and updated management in the accompanying text. It also has colour coded chapters, summary boxes with the key points and ICD codes for the more common or important conditions. In the online version of the book there are even more images of most conditions. There are icons to indicate if there is an associated picture gallery in the online version, how common a condition is, and its associated morbidity, and the index includes both page numbers for information on the topic and figure numbers for the relevant photographs, all making navigation a little easier. This book may put impressionable young minds off a career in dermatology though!

Jenni Parsons
Woodend, Vic

A Parent's Guide to Learning Difficulties – how to help your child

Peter Westwood

Camberwell, Victoria: ACER Press, 2008

ISBN 978 0 86431 840 4, \$32.94



■ The preliminary quiz in this book recommends against taking a child with learning difficulties to the family doctor as most GPs are not expert in this field and would simply refer on to a psychologist. In addition, the authors suggest that seeing a GP encourages an inappropriately 'clinical' atmosphere around the child's problem. However, parents of children with learning difficulties do present to GPs from time to time. This book may be of interest to these GPs as a parent information resource.

Peter Westwood is an experienced teacher, researcher and author in the field of education. This book covers intellectual disability and autism, impaired vision, impaired hearing and physical disability. However, it is largely focused on assisting ordinary children who are having trouble gaining basic skills. This book will help parents to understand the problem, to learn about how children gain skills and to work in collaboration with the child's teacher to overcome a learning problem.

Each chapter ends with information on resources and a list of key points for parents.

This book acknowledges that not all children learn in the same way and that a range of teaching approaches need to be used in early education. It favours direct teaching of basic numeracy skills and practice to achieve automaticity instead of relying entirely on the activity and discovery approach to learning mathematics.

I wonder whether medical educators might benefit from reading this book and considering whether the current emphasis on problem based learning should be leavened with more direct teaching of basic concepts, facts and skills.

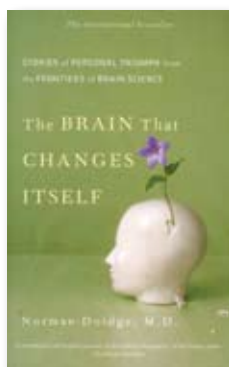
Mary Burbidge
Melbourne, Vic

The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science

Norman Doidge

Australia: Scribe Publications Pty Ltd, 2008

ISBN 978 1 9212 1582 7, \$35.00



■ In this book the author discusses neuroplasticity and provides us with insight on the effects of brain retraining. The brain rewires itself based on a 'use it or lose it' model and a related principle, 'neurons that fire together wire together'. This book sheds light on why so many people can't filter information, focus, or use the tools of reasoning and why others can. The author brings us the latest brain research with real life accounts that are both informative and interesting. These are detailed and supported by references.

Detailed within this book are stories of people who had seemingly insurmountable afflictions that had exhausted the efforts of conventional (and in many cases nonconventional) medicine to treat. They responded to brain training. It includes details of the research of Michael Merzenich on sharpening perception, improving memory, and increasing the speed of thought and its application to solving learning problems. There are explanations concerning the role of neuroplasticity in love and sexual attraction.

This book explores how brainwashing works, how mirrors and brain retraining can remove phantom limb pain permanently and provides some insight into how brain retraining can be effective in overcoming obsessive compulsive disorder. There are details of how the theories and research apply to psychoanalysis and it shows how and why 'talk therapy' causes beneficial structural changes to the brain. This is reinforced by the evidence that imagination can cause changes in brain structure as effectively as undertaking physically enforced training exercises.

This is an interesting book documenting new and exciting developments in brain research that are presented in a readable form. The subject is a work in progress and I look forward to where it takes us from here.

David Monash
Sale, Vic