**Book Reviews**


It is a pleasure to review this book by Dr Shenoy who, despite not having a degree in either medicine or law, has managed to do an excellent job of tackling the subject of medical negligence. He has been Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Employment, which has a large network of Employees’ State Insurance Corporation hospitals. He has also been a member of the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission. Both these positions have equipped him reasonably well to deal with the topic. I have had the privilege of arguing before him in the National Commission, and was always impressed by his cool and dignified demeanour and objective approach.

The book has been planned well and consists of five parts, the first two of which provide a perspective and general view. The third, which is the largest, discusses cases of medical negligence under various medical specialties. Such a specialty-wise discussion of cases is, naturally, appealing to doctors. However, an alternative approach, focusing on the legal principle involved (such as onus, res ipsa loquitur, need for expert opinion, cross-pathy, informed consent, limitation, lack of documentation, frivolous or vexatious complaints, etc.), would have been more educative for the reader. Obviously, this requires more time and work and involves detailed analysis.

The stated purpose of the book is to raise awareness of medical negligence among doctors, patients and hospitals. I have no hesitation in saying that the purpose has been achieved. The general appearance of the book is pleasing, as is the typeface used. The book could have been slightly cheaper but the fact remains that everything, including book publishing, is costly nowadays.

The following comments are not meant to belittle the author’s attempt. I make them merely to discharge my responsibility as a reviewer, who must present both sides of the picture.

Chapter 2, titled ‘Where have all the girls gone?’, certainly does not belong in a book on medical negligence. The Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994, has nothing to do with medical negligence. The author has even been challenged in the High Courts. It is in this chapter that the author ought to have discussed the liability of private corporate hospitals in Delhi to treat 10% of their indoor patients free of cost, as per a Delhi High Court judgment, and how this judgment is flouted frequently by the hospitals. The author also ought to have discussed the acute problem of the grossly inadequate health budget, which results in shortages of staff, equipment and facilities in the overcrowded environment of government hospitals. Such shortages are often reflected in unjust allegations of medical negligence.

Chapter 12 describes a case titled ‘Scissors left in woman’s belly found after 12 yrs’. This can be pardoned because Dr Shenoy is not a medical doctor. Every doctor knows that a surgeon simply never uses scissors. Besides, surgeons have evolved from barbers, not tailors. Similarly, no doctor would use the word ‘belly’. A more appropriate title would have been—‘Forceps left in woman’s abdomen found after 12 yrs’. Similarly, Chapter 13 describes a case titled ‘Surgery for excision of biopsy makes patient paraplegic’. To a medical person, this just does not make any sense.

The language in general is readable and of good standard, except in a few places where one comes across bloomers such as the following: ‘Can a voluntary organization formed to serve the interest of consumers is eligible to file a consumer complaint?’ (p. 38) and ‘Girls face disfigured’ (p. 95).

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**BOOK REVIEWS**


The author needs to be congratulated for this successful attempt at bringing out a clear and comprehensive handbook on breast cancer. The information in this book is up-to-date and touches upon all aspects of breast cancer, ranging from the reasons for its occurrence to what one can eat following treatment for the disease. This well-written handbook even addresses the oft-asked questions, doubts and apprehensions of patients in minute detail and in a delicate manner. The book is easy to understand, with its lucid and crisp language. It will make excellent reading for all educated women. I strongly advise the author to get the book translated into different Indian languages so that women who do not know English can also benefit from the comprehensive information presented in it.

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This soft-cover book offers a detailed and practical approach to gastrointestinal disorders among children. It approaches the subject both symptom-wise and system-wise. While the book covers most aspects of paediatric gastroenterology, the main topics of interest to a paediatrician include abdominal pain, food allergy, chronic diarrhoea, upper and lower gastrointestinal bleeding, motility disorders, inflammatory bowel disease, surgical conditions, as well as diseases of the liver and pancreas.

The series editor and the editor of this volume are from Israel, and the contributors come from the UK, USA, various countries in Europe and Israel. The book is divided into eight sections, in which complicated topics have been explained in a lucid, yet pithy manner. The algorithms are in the form of flowcharts and are self-explanatory. They are accompanied by brief descriptions of various topics. The list of citations after each chapter is a good source for those looking for additional information on a particular topic.

One obvious drawback of the book is that there is no mention of certain topics, such as the approach to colitis, space-occupying lesions of the liver, recurrent jaundice and splenomegaly. The sections on acute and chronic pancreatitis are incomplete in that they do not mention the recent recommendations and management guidelines. The mix of symptom-based (e.g. pain, vomiting, bleeding) and disease-based (e.g. cyclic vomiting syndrome, achalasia) approaches is sometimes confusing and the book could have been organized in a better way. Some topics, such as abdominal pain and right lower quadrant pain, could have been put together to make for better understanding. The small font size makes reading difficult.

The main advantage of this book is that it gives a bird’s eye view of various disorders and can serve as a useful guide, especially for physicians and residents with a basic knowledge of the diseases dealt with and gastroenterology. It also provides guidance on how one should proceed in different clinical situations. The book has an attractive cover, and the paper and printing are of good quality. The layout too is aesthetically appealing.

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The Falk symposium was held in Mainz (Germany) from 3 to 6 October 2012. The topics discussed included advances and controversies in the field of luminal gastroenterology and liver diseases, especially liver tumours. This book summarizes the presentations made by leading experts from across the world. It encompasses a wide variety of topics in a concise form that is reader-friendly.

In a world characterized by the rapid evolution of knowledge, science, too, is growing and it is often difficult to keep pace with the advances. This book is aimed at all practising physicians, gastroenterologists and surgeons. It aptly summarizes many topics of clinical importance. Some of the highlights of the book are the chapters on the management of oesophageal cancer, inflammatory bowel disease and hepatic malignancies. Various recent advances in the areas of gastroenterology, as well as liver cirrhosis and tumours, have been dealt with and matters of debate in these areas have been discussed. The individual chapters are well organized, and address specific issues and questions related to the management of patients.

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The book is compact and well illustrated with tables and figures. The typeface is clear and readable. I recommend this book as much for its compact style as for the accuracy of its contents.

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This book is a sincere effort to introduce basic haematology approaches to the diagnosis of important disease states such as anaemia. It rightly emphasizes proper history-taking, and provides an exhaustive and excellent template for the pertinent questions to be asked of the patient. It goes on to provide a detailed description of anaemia in tropical regions, which is followed by a thorough discussion of the aetiology of anaemia caused by parasites, though the treatment is not dealt with. Unfortunately, the chapter on iron deficiency anaemia has been dealt with in a lacklustre manner and has nothing new to offer. Greater care has been taken over the chapter on megaloblastic anaemia, which will be useful for the purpose of review both for students and practitioners. The chapter on anaemia of chronic disease is written lucidly and describes in a simple manner this entity, which is relatively less understood and the diagnosis of which is often missed.

The chapters on leukaemia are unfortunately fraught with factual errors related to outcome, response and survival. These may cause serious confusion in counselling of patients and errors in decision-making on the care of patients. The author has made no mention of the currently used risk stratification approach to acute leukaemias. The approach is based on cytogenetics and molecular markers, which are available in and used by all major treating centres. Many of the therapies outlined in the book are outdated and not standard of care. These include ex vivo purging of bone marrow before autologous transplant. Also, no one gives 106 cycles of chemotherapy in acute myeloid leukaemia. Many treatments mentioned appear to be copied from case reports or review articles dating back to the 1980s and 1990s. Similar shortcomings are evident in the chapter on acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, which contains several incorrect statements. For example, protocols on acute lymphoblastic leukaemia do not recommend the use of high-dose methotrexate (5 g/m²) for the protection of the central nervous systems. Also, matched unrelated transplants or even partially mismatched transplants are not ‘experimental treatment’. Most references are from the 1980s and 1990s, but we have moved on 20 years from then. This flaw is most pronounced in the chapter on myelodysplastic syndrome, in which the classification and therapies are completely obsolete. The chapter on therapy for multiple myeloma urgently needs to be brought up to date as we are in a new era in which very effective therapy is available. The important and large list of lymphomas and chronic lymphoproliferative diseases has received three scant pages of attention. It would have been better if this section had been omitted entirely. There is no section on chronic myeloid leukaemia, which is the most common leukaemia in India.

The chapters on coagulation and blood transfusion are simple and lucidly written. They are of practical value and well presented. The fact that most of the references are from the 1990s does not detract from the usefulness of the latter chapter since blood transfusion practices have not changed much. Nucleic acid testing and pre-storage leucocyte depletion, procedures followed by most good blood banks today, are unfortunately not described. Also, there is no mention of the important steps for making blood transfusions safer.

This textbook is handy in terms of size, simple and presented in a practically useful manner. It would have been of value to students and practitioners if it had been factually correct, and had helped them understand and utilize the advances in haematology–oncology. The author should have played to her strengths. For example, the chapters on approaches to anaemia, megaloblastic anaemia and anaemia of chronic diseases are well written and deserve a reading. If the text had been geared to only this niche of benign haematology, the book would have achieved its aim. There are not many texts to guide students on these commonly encountered reasons for and the often multifactorial aetiology of anaemia, particularly in the tropics. However, a serious attempt will need to be made to correct the mistakes and update the book before it can be recommended to a wider readership.

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Doing research and writing it up as a thesis is an essential part of the curricula of postgraduate courses in medicine and related fields in India. However, students find writing theses difficult since they are not exposed to various aspects of biomedical research either during the graduate or postgraduate years, before they embark on their thesis work. Often, they do not receive much help from their guides either. Thus, they somehow trudge along with their
thesis work. They become aware of the shortcomings of their work when it is nearing completion and the thesis is due for submission. By then, it is often too late to retrieve the research work.

This book attempts to address the problems faced while writing a thesis and the gaps in this area. It has been written for postgraduate students in medical and allied subjects, with the aim of providing them with an elementary knowledge of the steps involved in writing a thesis protocol and the journey thereafter, culminating in a good thesis. Being associated with such students as a guide in thesis writing, I feel that this book will serve as a useful practical aid for them.

The book, which is written in a user-friendly manner, has 26 chapters. These cover a wide variety of topics related to research methodology and scientific writing. The chapters are written in an essay style which is easy to follow, and each one has highlighted subheadings accompanied by practical examples. In each chapter, the authors share their experience of the art of thesis preparation with the readers, while keeping in mind that they are unlikely to have much prior knowledge of the concepts being discussed.

The book begins by describing the importance of biomedical research and thesis writing. It then guides the reader through the initial step of choosing an area of study, identifying a research problem and formulating a thesis topic. The book also provides information on various types of research designs and gives the reader an introduction to basic statistical tests. The types of data and the statistical tools used for the evaluation of data of each type have been explained clearly. This information, though concise, should help the student to develop a strong study protocol before he/she starts working on the subject, to conduct the study well and to analyse the data generated.

Once the work is completed, it needs to be written in the form of a thesis. The book outlines the salient components of a thesis and the content of each component. Each chapter ends with a checklist of the steps for writing a particular component. To facilitate the student’s task further, there is a listing of acronyms, which could be handy for young readers.

The authors provide information on how to search the literature and PubMed. However, the book does not discuss the use of bibliographical (reference management) softwares and the advantages associated with their use. The students could have benefited from this information, particularly because several such tools are currently available free online.

The results section describes the types of data generated in research work. However, the authors could have included more examples of the various possible methods of the graphical representation of scientific data. Further, it would have been useful to have a section dedicated to the methods for recording and storing data.

The typeface is easy on the eye and the book is written in a more or less lucid fashion. However, at places, information is repeated within a chapter, though in different words, and this can be annoying to a discerning reader. Also, some ideas are repeated in different chapters. Future editions could benefit from tighter editing.

This book is not a comprehensive textbook on research methodology or scientific writing, but an elementary guide that serves its purpose well. It is aimed at introducing students and researchers to the art of thesis writing and guiding them through the process. The authors have succeeded in achieving the aim they have mentioned in the preface: ‘It [the book] can be used as a bench manual—to be referred to at every stage of working on a thesis.’ Those who have been engaged in research for some time would find the book too elementary. However, the bibliography at the end of each chapter is a useful guide to the resources and guidelines related to the particular topic, and students can access these if they feel the need to do so.

Overall, this book covers various aspects of writing theses and provides postgraduate students with adequate information on how to embark on their first research project. They could later build on this knowledge with the help of further reading and practical experience. The book would be a welcome addition to any library that caters to postgraduate students, and its readership would include postgraduate students, PhD candidates, and those who are starting the journey of writing and publishing biomedical research.

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