

capacity to cope with stressors and anxieties and avoid unhealthy social influences while completing these developmental tasks. They also stress the importance of comprehensive programs that not only include the adolescent as the focus but also include the social and family environment. This is a very interesting and important book.

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### **A Colour Atlas of the Nail in Clinical Diagnosis**

by D. W. Beaven, MD, and S. E. Brooks, MD, 240 pp, with illus, \$151.18 (hardcover), ISBN 0-7234-0826-2 (paperback, ISBN 0-7234-1532-3), London, England, Wolfe Medical Publications Ltd, 1993.

The Down and Under country, as New Zealand is sometimes affectionately known, has brought the world its kiwifruit, world-best cricket players, koala bears, and a few less-known marsupials, which have roamed the countryside since the Jurassic times. But today, Drs Beaven and Brooks bring the world of family physicians an unusually attractive and world-first color atlas of New Zealand, entirely devoted to the clinical description of the nails of humans who have primary nail disease or other clinical diseases manifested in nails and of healthy individuals without nail disease or other systemic diseases.

This book is particularly attractive to me not only because of my interests in the presentation of human nails in systemic diseases<sup>1</sup> but also because it emphasizes and resurrects the dying art of clinical physical diagnosis in family practice settings where new, young graduate physicians and their patients are seduced and rely mainly on modern imaging technology to diagnose most conditions.

Fingernails carry the record of

a patient's recent health history.<sup>1</sup> Keeping that in mind, the authors present a clear and comprehensive atlas of normal and abnormal human fingernails and toenails. A *Colour Atlas of the Nail in Clinical Diagnosis* is a pictorial topography of nails, organized into 16 concise chapters, ranging from normal nail anatomy and physiology, to approach to nail examinations, to nail signs of all medical conditions. It is available in paperback and hardcover. (Only the hardcover is currently available in the United States.) It emphasizes the clinical skills of observation and visual inspection of nails under adequate lighting; a skill so important in dermatology!

The photographs are accompanied by sparse text. An abundant and generous supply of approximately 402 beautiful, glossy, clinically accurate, realitylike color photographs of nails, representing different medical conditions, make up the bulk of the atlas. Where the color photograph fails to convey the message or the pathologic condition, the authors undertook a painstakingly artistic job of adding an anatomically accurate sketch of the same picture to illustrate either new terms or subtle clinical changes inapparent to the neophyte in onychology.

Readers are warned that they may be disappointed if they expect to find a specific nail sign for each specific disease. Although the authors have made a commendable effort to group different nail signs under a specific rubric (ie, "Altered Circulation"), not each nail sign as presented is pathognomonic of a specific disease. For example, while onycholysis may be a sign of thyroid disease, it is also found in psoriasis, anemia, nail trauma, and many other medical conditions. As it is elsewhere in medicine, it is by a combination of good history taking and clinical examination that one can arrive at the diagnosis. In this instance, I believe that the authors have succeeded in expanding the horizons of clinicians by providing clinical cues and new weap-

ons to their armamentarium of skills to diagnose medical conditions.

In reading the atlas, American readers may find certain familiar expressions spelled or even expressed somewhat differently, if they are not familiar with British and/or English terminology. For example, "subungual hematoma" is called "subungual distal hemorrhages" and "tuberous sclerosis" is referred to as "tuberoscrosis." While this may be distracting, these expressions do not change the overall meaning that the text conveys.

I felt convinced after reading this book that I must have missed many clues to several medical problems of my patients by failing to allow a reasonable amount of time to incorporate the examination of a patient's nails as an essential part of the routine physical examination. At the exorbitant price of \$151.18, I do not believe that this is an affordable book for residents or students. But family practice students and residents would find it enjoyable, challenging, and stimulating reading if it is made available to them through their hospital, medical school, or residency libraries because it requires little reading. *A Colour Atlas of the Nail in Clinical Diagnosis* is for established family physicians who can afford it and would find it a stimulating challenge in refreshing their skills and who can incorporate the examination of nails in their daily routine to enhance their service to their patients.

In conclusion, the authors have proved their contention that the examination of nails is a valuable indicator of patients' general medical conditions by supplying evidence supporting it through authoritative photographs. I enjoyed reading the section on "Methods of Nail Examination" in chapter 1. It has made me become suspect of polished and adorned nails, which usually camouflage valuable clinical clues to systemic illnesses (ie, Beau's lines). Who would have ever thought that nail polish and popular adorned nails are recognized sources of allergic and irritant dermatitis elsewhere expressed on

the patient's skin? I think that family physicians are in a position of understanding my excitement for this little book ( $5\frac{1}{2}\times 7\frac{1}{2}\times \frac{3}{4}$ ), since they pride themselves in giving comprehensive continuous care to patients regardless of sex, age, or diseased organ.

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1. Kabongo ML, Bedell AW. Nails: signs of systemic conditions. *Am Fam Physician*. 1987;36:109-116.

### **Exploring Rural Medicine: Current Issues and Concepts**

edited by Barbara P. Yawn, Angeline Bushy, and Roy A. Yawn, 332 pp, \$49.95 (softcover, \$24.95), ISBN 0-8039-4851-4 (softcover, ISBN 0-8039-4852-2), Thousand Oaks, Calif, SAGE Publications Inc, 1994.

This book presents a collection of articles about rural medicine by 25 authors on a variety of topics. The work is intended for students and residents who are aspiring to a rural practice and for physicians who are already practicing in rural locations. There are 22 chapters that cover an assortment of topics that are likely to interest future or current rural practitioners. The print is of reasonable size and good quality. There are no illustrations or graphs, but one will find many useful tables. As I read the volume, several grammatical and proofing errors were noted; however, the material is generally quite readable.

The chapters appear to have been selected to represent topics that are thought to be of concern to rural physicians. Starting with a general discussion of the unique nature of rural practice, both historically and in the future, the editors then selected articles dealing with obstetrical problems in rural women and with treatment of the ill newborn, including infants with bronchopulmonary dysplasia. The opening chapter presents a thoughtful discussion of the unique

nature of rural practice, although much of the material clearly reflects the opinions of the author. While the chapter on obstetrics briefly discusses the special problems faced by physicians providing prenatal care and deliveries in rural settings, the two chapters on problems experienced by the newborn do not focus on the concerns of dealing with these issues in a rural setting. Indeed, the failure of the authors to approach their subjects from the novel vantage point of rural physicians remains an unfortunately recurrent problem throughout the edition, with the exception of brief "rurally representative" comments that sometimes appear at the end of a chapter. I wondered if all the authors had experienced rural practice and were personally cognizant of its nature.

The format of chapter selection seems to follow the patient or family life cycle, because the next section is a useful literature review of adolescent pregnancies in rural areas. Adult problems, including mental health, environmental hazards, and trauma, follow in sequence. A practical article on the use of thrombolytic agents for treatment of acute myocardial infarction in a rural setting is the next inclusion. A potentially useful discussion of women's health issues became an overly brief review, without a significant focus on the aspects of these problems in rural areas. The treatment of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome in the rural setting is reviewed, followed by the presentation of material on end-of-life issues, including the treatment of terminal cancer and dying patients. The last several chapters in the publication deal with practice process and practice management issues. An interesting chapter on health maintenance unfortunately failed to deal with the unusual problems that the rural physician faces in this area owing to the nature of the patients who compose the practice. The chapter on cultural competency presents a very rational, though opinionated, review of the unique cultural issues found in ru-

ral areas. Lastly, there are valuable discussions on ethics, quality assessment, and living through professional liability litigation in rural practice.

As a former rural practitioner, I found *Exploring Rural Medicine: Current Issues and Concepts* to be both an encouraging and a frustrating work. Students aspiring to rural careers and the rural practitioner are in desperate need of a comprehensive text of all areas seen in primary care written from a rural practitioner's viewpoint and a small volume that discusses the special nature, problems, patients, and character of rural practice. This book is neither. In some areas, it strives to be the former (eg, chapter 7, "Adolescent Pregnancies in Rural America: A Review of the Literature and Strategies for Prevention"), while in others it almost succeeds at accomplishing parts of the latter (eg, chapter 1, "Rural Medical Practice: Present and Future"). This attempt to fill these gaping niches in rural medical literature is extremely encouraging, but the failure to accomplish either task is frustrating. Several excellent chapters begin with a discussion of the essential problems affecting rural practice, and several other chapters begin with high-quality, in-depth reviews of specific areas of concern; however, neither task is pursued to completion. The authors of several chapters seem to have forgotten that they were writing about rural medicine, because they fail to mention it in their material. In other chapters, unsuccessful attempts are made to deal with huge (and worthy) subject areas in a highly condensed and summarized fashion. Intermingled with these disappointments are several superb articles providing excellent insight into and thoughtful discussion of rural practice and problems.

Finally, in spite of my concerns about this edition, it is recommended to each aspiring and rural primary care provider. The paucity of useful current works in this area, coupled with the high quality of several chapters of this book, make "finding the pearls" a rational use of