Book reviews

Brocklehurst’s textbook of geriatric medicine and gerontology (7th Edition)

H. M. Fillit, K. Rockwood, K. Woodhouse, and Sauder Philadelphia


Dürer’s description of Bellini in late life—‘the master is old, but in painting still the best’—applies to this, the most well-established geriatric medicine and gerontology textbook, now in its 7th edition. The combination of a general gerontology introduction with geriatric medicine remains a successful formula, and the access to the online text is a valuable bonus. The format has been kept impressively compact, and the authorship has a more pronounced North American flavour—of 209 contributors, 50% are from the USA, 33% from the UK and 9% from Canada.

A good geriatric medicine textbook requires wit and a deft touch to steer between the lacunes in our knowledge and nosology of complex syndromes of later life while providing pragmatic and sensible approaches. The editors and contributors succeed with panache. Even so, every Persian carpet has deliberate flaws to highlight the perfection of the rest. Therefore, with confidence in the healthy ageing of this classic textbook, a few suggestions for future editions: more continental European contributors (less than 4% in this edition), more emphasis on the demographic dividend (why does every review of cognitive ageing omit what we gain with later life?), rethink causation (surely drugs precipitate rather than cause orthostatic hypotension in susceptible individuals?) and a chapter on driving/transportation. Notwithstanding, this remains the leading major text in what is thankfully a growing and ever more competitive market.

Psychology of Aging

Martin Orrell


The review of this book of key papers fortunately coincided with the preparation of a 3rd year module on the psychology of ageing. It made the preparation of my module less time consuming, since almost all the topics I intended to cover were addressed in the book by relevant and important research papers. The range of papers includes older classics as well as recent research. There are key cognitive papers using longitudinal data to study ageing and cognition. Turning to social and emotional functioning, there are papers on both social networks and social support, and when focusing on families and carers there are key papers on stress and on caregiver burden. I was also pleased to see a classic paper on spousal bereavement in later life. There is an even spread of papers dealing with everyday ageing, as well as those focusing on more clinical aspects such as depression and dementia, and a spread of papers covering both basic science and application. Although this book is a collection of key papers and not a textbook, I will certainly use this book both in my teaching and in my own research when dealing with unfamiliar areas. I will be recommending this book for the library.

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