BOOK REVIEWS

Review of *Basic Sciences for Ophthalmology*

Louise Bye, Neil Modi, Miles Stanford, Eds.
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Basic Sciences for Ophthalmology is a textbook aimed at junior ophthalmologists sitting for their Part 1 exam for fellowship of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists. The back cover material states that this is 'the only resource you will need to pass the FRCOphth Part 1 exam.' Though the back cover material suggests that the contents should also be of interest to basic scientists, senior clinicians and allied professions, realistically it is most relevant to those cramming for relevant exams. It is therefore entering a niche market where most ophthalmologists who have passed their exams have an opinion on which texts are worth using and most trainees choose their text based on recommendations from senior colleagues. In addition, the application pack from the Royal College contains a reading list of recommended texts (in which it is not currently included). So to make an impact it needs to be different and better than the established alternatives.

The text with which it must most directly compete is *The Eye: Basic Sciences and Practice* (2003) by Forrester *et al.*¹ but to meet its claim to be 'the only resource you need to pass...' it must also replace *Clinical Anatomy of the Eye* (1998) by Snell *et al.* and *Clinical Optics* (1999) by Elkington *et al.*^{2,3} It should therefore be considered in relation to the competition.

It is only 272 pages long, so it is concise. The chapter layout is comprehensive and fairly standard and really does seem to cover all the areas needed for Part 1. The anatomy chapter is logical, well presented and readable, though with some minor irritations; for instance, I could not find all of the named skull base foramina on the associated diagrams and pictures. In comparison with the required knowledge, however, there is not enough detail and the trainee intending to pass Part 1 should still purchase Snell *et al.*² The only slightly odd decision is to put anatomy at the start, but embryology and developmental defects (growth and senescence) at the end, with degenerative disease separated from pathology.

The clear and engaging style of writing continues throughout and the reader finds that all of the major subject areas and important concepts are clearly and succinctly covered. There is a clinical focus and the basic science is linked to clinical problems.

Similar to the anatomy chapter, the optics chapter is concise and clear, but falls well below the level of detail required for Part 1 and trainees should still read Elkington *et al.*³

So while it cannot quite live up to the back cover claims of being 'the only resource you need,' because separate anatomy and optics books are still required, the main question is, can it replace Forrester *et al.*?¹ I am inclined to say not. It is not a significant departure in style from the competition and, while I prefer the style of writing in *Basic Sciences for Ophthalmology*, the two ways in which this book falls short are on organisation and on the level of detail. On organisation, for example, I would rather read about the lens in one place, instead of split between the physiology and biochemistry chapters. Criticising the level of detail is also subjective and it may be that the level presented is adequate for a Part 1 pass. Personally, I would rather use a more comprehensive text, but the trainee inclined to minimise the time spent reading books should consider this one.

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