BOOK REVIEW

Diagnostic Imaging for the Emergency Physician

Authored by Joshua S Broder.
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I was not sure what to make of this book when it first arrived. As an emergency physician I use diagnostic imaging all the time and we have a fantastic radiology department just round the corner. It’s stocked with radiologists who are (for the most part) a delight to interact with and who are extremely helpful. Why then might I need a book that gives more information on the interpretation and understanding of radiological techniques? I’m pretty good with plain films, so why do I need more? Could this be another foray into a specialty that should be best left alone?

At first glance, I was therefore a bit lost and my first impression was that this might be radiology-lite. However, having spent some time with the text I now think I understand and believe that this text has a place. This is not ‘radiology-lite’; it is truly rooted in the specialty and focuses on the selection and interpretation of diagnostic imaging across the spectrum of our practice. It spans the divide that sometimes seems to appear between specialities, and the reader is introduced to problems, solutions and interpretations from both radiological and emergency department (ED) perspectives.

The authorship takes an American perspective with frequent references to costs and cost variation, fascinating stuff, and while not directly relevant to my practice the thoughts and arguments about resource management are well made and are arguably increasingly important across all health systems.

What I really enjoyed in this book is the clear demonstration that ED imaging extends beyond the plain x-ray. Much of the book is concerned with CT, MR and ultrasound scans which are increasingly a core of our practice and this text is the first I have seen that clearly reflects this. Dr Broder clearly believes that emergency physicians should be involved in the selection and interpretation of all these modalities and I think he is right. Emergency radiology is not something that someone else does, it should be something we share and this will help us engage in those conversations. The content allows this with superb illustrations throughout, clearly labelled with clinical vignettes that chimed with my own experiences.

This is not a cover-to-cover read; stylistically, it is rather list-like in content, an inevitability perhaps in a text that covers such a vast area, but despite this it is accessible and the online feature that allows the text to be searched is fantastic. When using the online version, you can magnify any image that appears to be a little small in the paper version, a real demonstration of a successful pairing of paper and e-publishing. Where possible, data are presented on the true performance of clinical tests in practice together with guidelines for ‘the most appropriate imaging modality/technique’. I can see this helping in some of the more tricky ED—radiology discussions! So while I can see trainees using this book in preparation for exams where they might feel a need to brush up on a specific area of radiological imaging, I will be using it more as a reference text on a day-to-day basis, driven to the information by contemporaneous clinical problems.

Am I going to feel that I know more than my radiology colleagues after reading this book? No, clearly not. However, this book will help me have more informed conversations with them, and as a result I think I’ll be getting a better service in the coming months.

Finally I doff my cap to Dr Joshua S Broder who appears to have written this 800+ page book almost single-handedly. It is clearly his passion and I am glad that he has shared this with the rest of the emergency medicine community.

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