

Sleep & Sleep Disorders A Practical Handbook - Book Review

Sleep & Sleep Disorders *A Practical Handbook* - Johan Verbraecken et al.

£126.56 – Acco Shop

BSS members may well agree that sleep medicine has been an under-recognised and under-researched area for the lifetime of Western medicine. It is therefore no surprise that there is a relative paucity of comprehensive and up to date reference books in the domain. A simple search of any online bookstore is enough to confirm that the literature for our growing subject area would benefit from more experts translating knowledge and wisdom into print.

It is in this context that Professor Johan Verbraecken et al. have stepped forward with *Sleep & Sleep Disorders A Practical Handbook*. The stated aim of the authors was to “write an accessible book in which all relevant practical and theoretical aspects of sleep and sleep disorders are brought together in a coherent way.”

The book provides its reader an excellent first impression thanks to its modern and stylish hardcover. As I opened it for the first time it was a pleasure to peruse its contemporary layout, typeset and spacing. The aesthetic helps to make the more challenging subject areas covered by the text more palatable. It is, however, somewhat unfortunate that the generous spacing of the text contributes to *Sleep and Sleep Disorders* stretching the definition of ‘handbook.’

The subjects covered by this text are, of course, fascinating. It is both a joy for the reader and an accomplishment for the authors that the breadth of sleep medicine is covered in one volume. Indeed, Verbraecken et al have therein achieved the difficult feat of saying something about everything in this ever-expanding field. For example, a recent difficult case gave me cause to review the various mechanisms which are implicated in obstructive sleep apnoea. I was glad to have *Sleep & Sleep Disorders* on my desk at that time; its succinct and clear explanations of the prevailing pathophysiological theories were an excellent starting point from which to develop my thoughts and further reading.

Elsewhere, in areas slightly further afield from my own expertise in sleep disordered breathing, the book provides engaging content for interest or reference. Its section titled ‘Sleeping to learn’ provides an absorbing overview of our scientific understanding of sleep and its importance to memory. In doing so it directly references the key studies and their contributions to the field such that the reader is aware of the evidence base and where to find the primary source should they wish. The language used adequately conveys meaning and later editions will no doubt refine the quality of the writing in more prosaic chapters such as this.

As a first edition textbook *Sleep and Sleep Disorders* is a worthy addition to the institutional libraries of sleep services in Europe. However, it is not a perfect work, nor would one think that its authors would expect it to be at this stage. The most obvious criticism to make is that the book could be made more concise. In particular, there are 40 pages before part 1 begins in earnest and 50 pages at the end of the text. The 50 pages at the end comprise a long table cross-referencing the ESRS catalogue of knowledge and skills, a glossary of abbreviations and an index. The cross-referencing is perhaps useful for those undertaking the ESRS exam; however, one wonders if this can be assimilated into the contents page or provided as a separate appendix.

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There are other areas where the book's concision could be strengthened. At times, the history of science and discovery is somewhat laboured. Whilst, for some, the history of oxygen measurement is an interesting addition to a section on the technical factors involved in oximetry it is perhaps surplus to the aims of the handbook. Elsewhere a great deal of paper is spent describing physiological mechanisms which are connected to sleep yet this is not followed by deep exploration of their clinical relevance or future frontiers. For instance, the body's mechanisms of thermoregulation are described at length over several pages, yet this is only followed by a two-sentence section of clinical relevance.

In summary, Sleep and Sleep Disorders is a worthwhile and welcome addition to the growing catalogue of literature in sleep medicine. The book may benefit from further editing with a particular focus upon concision, however, it provides good insight and is an enjoyable read.



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