
Book Review

Differential Diagnosis for Primary Care: A Handbook for Health Care Practitioners, 2nd Edition

Jennifer R. Jamison. Edinburgh: Elsevier (Churchill Livingstone); 2007. ISBN 9780 443102875. Soft cover, 674 pp. plus CD-ROM, RRP USD\$ 69.95, AUD\$ 99.00. Website: www.elsevier.com

It is a challenge for educators of chiropractors to effectively teach differential diagnosis for non-neuromusculoskeletal conditions common to primary care practice. It is simply the nature of the beast and the low frequency of presentation of such conditions to chiropractic teaching clinics that creates this challenge. Many institutions rotate interns through outpatient settings where these presentations may be common, but a drawback is the sporadic nature of such exposure and the potential lack of a reasonable clinical framework to support learning.

This work by Jamison goes a long way toward providing a good framework and should be considered by all chiropractic institutions as a resource to support the learning of differential diagnosis. The text itself is simple enough, being divided into three parts: principles, complaints, clinical conditions.

The Differential Diagnosis of Patients' Complaints is a very useful part because it is arranged alphabetically by plain language complaint, such as jaundice, fever, and cough. By way of exemplifying how this book functions, let us explore Cough, as Chapter 16 in Part Two. There are only seven pages as a combination of text in point form and flow charts; however, the power of the learning instrument comes by cross-reference to the CD-ROM, which not only contains the figures as portable document files (pdf), but allows the selection and inclusion of these into a PowerPoint presentation to support class-based instruction.

The next powerful learning tool is the associated Case Study, also on the CD-ROM. In the case of Cough, the case is a simple two-line opener: "*Ralf Jones is a 58-year-old man who presents complaining of chest pain and a productive cough. He has recently moved into the area. He lives alone.*" There are then collections of multiple-choice questions prefaced by additional clinical information to build the case. In one instance, the student is presented with two diagnostic options, pneumonia with pleurisy or pulmonary embolus. Each is a hot-link to more detailed reading and the student is able to make his or her choice and then click an *answer* button to receive feedback.

An important aspect of the feedback is the choice of language used by Jamison. The incorrect responses are not stated as "wrong"; rather the explanation commences with "disagree." This is a subtle means to replicate conversational learning, which is the preferred mode in clinical decision making, as exemplified in the television series *House*.

Part Three, The Clinical Conditions, is supported by also being in electronic form on the CD with a fairly good search engine. A bonus with the CD is the additional section, Practice Tips. These are organized by chapter and, with the example Cough, provide a selection of useful Practice Tips or Clinical Pearls per chapter.

As a student of Jamison, this writer lived through the period of overhead transparencies and 35-mm slides. Now, as an educator of chiropractors, I warmly acknowledge the power and the value of this current iteration of Jamison's content. Today's students are fortunate that an experienced and competent educator has brought her content into this contemporary format.

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