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Citation: Shanahan, Donal (2009) Patrick W. Tank and Thomas R. Gest, Atlas of Anatomy. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2008. ISBN: 9780781785051. [Book review]. Clinical Anatomy, 22 (7). p. 848. ISSN 0897-3806

Published by: Wiley-Blackwell

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ca.20845> <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ca.20845>>

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Atlas of Anatomy. By Patrick W Tank and Thomas R Gest. 432 pp., Lippincott Williams & Wilkins 2009.

This book is divided into eight chapters: Chapter 1 (pp. 5-27) Palpable Features of the Back; Chapter 2 The Upper Limb (pp. 28-83); Chapter 3 The Lower Limb (pp. 84-157); Chapter 4 The Thorax (pp.158-209); Chapter 5 The Pelvis and Perineum (pp. 210-255); Chapter 6 The Abdomen (pp. 256 - 293); Chapter 7 The Head and Neck (pp. 294-391); Chapter 8 The Autonomic Nervous System (392-418). Each chapter consists of carefully selected colour illustrations to show the essential anatomy of each region of the body. To aid learning and ease of use the authors have followed a logical sequence in each chapter by starting with palpable features which naturally leads to relevant osteology and arthrology and then adopting a superficial to deep approach by illustrating cutaneous innervation and then delving deeper into the body.

One view of faculty and students is that anatomy study can lead to information overload as a number of anatomy atlases contain images that can have up to forty labels and this multiplied by the number of images creates a substantial body of information. Of course a small section of this information which will be extremely important. However, students are naturally focused on relevant structures and it is not always clear in anatomy atlases what structures are actually crucial to their learning of applied anatomy. So I'm pleased that the authors have chosen to limit the number of labels to identify important structures rather than label all the structures that are visible. Indeed "less is more" as the authors have chosen to limit not only the labelling but the number of illustrations in this book and we are presented with clearly labelled relevant images that support the learning of current medical students. These illustrations are exquisite in that the use of colour is breath-taking and the artists have also successfully used ghosting of associated structures to give the reader a clear sense of the orientation of each drawing and the structures that are directly related to the area of interest. This textbook is enhanced by the availability of all of the illustrations online and there is a searchable facility for the labels on each illustration which students will find useful. I think that students will find the online self quiz section helpful as it will test their ability to identify vital structures on each image and provide instant feedback on their choice.

This book is a collaboration between artists and anatomists that successfully builds on the historical links that have always existed between us and I congratulate the authors and artists on creating a comprehensive innovative atlas of anatomy. This book will be of value to medical undergraduates and postgraduates who wish to be able to clearly identify the inter-relationship of structures in the body without wading through unnecessary detail.

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