

A Textbook of Clinical Dermatology

By A. D. Somorin

This textbook of dermatology is a welcome addition to the volumes of monographs in various subspecialties of medicine which have come from Africa in the last two decades. The monograph covers the broad spectrum of skin diseases, with special emphasis on presentations peculiar to the tropics and the developing world. Until recently dermatology has not received adequate exposure which had been given to other subspecialties in Africa and the Tropics.

The Monograph is a 200-page document which the author divided into thirteen sections. Each section covers a particular area of dermatology, ranging from the influence of the environment on the structure and function of the skin and the disorders which result when the balance between the environment and the skin is disturbed, to a comprehensive description of dermatological problems encountered in clinical practice. These problems include congenital and acquired diseases. Allergy in relation to the skin and cutaneous manifestations of systemic diseases is given due prominence. Of importance is the role of parasitic and entomological diseases of the skin in the tropics and developing world. The author has devoted several chapters to these problems to highlight their importance in clinical practice. Disorders of pigmentation, which are common problems in dermatology practice, are also highlighted. A chapter is devoted, justifiably to sexually transmitted disease, a condition which is now causing a major problem in developing and developed countries.

Chapter thirty-three should probably have been given the title of Diagnostic and Therapeutic Dermatology in order to give a true reflection of the content of this chapter. The style of presentation is concise and it is in the form of lecture notes, with subheadings in each chapter. This format makes the monograph easily readable and will be particularly acceptable

to medical students and doctors, who may not have enough patience to go through the more formalized style of prose writing. The tables are clearly presented and make easy reading. One area which I believe should be addressed in the next edition is the frequent use of abbreviations in the book. The author might have been mindful of trying to conserve space and cost. Such abbreviations are not commonly used in books of this nature.

The photographs to illustrate types of skin lesions are numerous and will be found useful. However, they have all been lumped together in the last section of the book. It would have been preferable for ease of reference for the photographs of each disease entity to be arranged as close as possible to the area where these diseases are being described in the text. The photographs should also be numbered as figures, just as the author did for the tables, for easy identification. Furthermore, colour photographs would probably have enhanced the quality of the information being conveyed with these photographs of the lesions better than the black and white ones.

The references are relevant and useful for those who may require further information on the diseases described. This monograph conveys a wealth of information on the practice of dermatology with special reference to the tropics. It will serve as a reference book for students and practising doctors in the tropics who are compelled, most of the time, to depend mainly on textbooks of dermatology written primarily for temperate and economically advanced countries.

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