

MALE GENITAL SKIN DISEASE

Christopher B. Bunker

Review of the first edition
published by Saunders,

PHILADELPHIA, 2004. 285 PAGES | ISBN 070202760X

‘This text is a ‘must read’ for all doctors in the field of male genital disease, from the interested general practitioner to specialists in this field.’

CHRIS BUNKER runs an outpatient clinic in male genital dermatoses in London with the assistance of both a genitourinary physician and a urologist, acquiring a vast experience in this field. Chris Bunker has co-authored the chapter on genital, perianal and umbilical dermatology (chapter 68) in the latest edition of ‘Rook’s Textbook of Dermatology’ (7th edition 2004).

This is an outstanding text, full of excellent colour clinical and histological photographs. It more than adequately achieves its stated objective in helping clinicians in the accurate diagnosis of male genital skin disease, directing suitable treatment. This text is the best book on male genital dermatology currently on the English language market.

It quickly becomes apparent that this book is written by an experienced, practising clinician and not a remote academic drawing on other clinician’s

experience. The outstanding feature of this text is the multiple, clear, clinical photographs, demonstrating the author’s great breadth and depth of clinical experience in male genital disease. Other texts may have one or occasionally two photographic examples of every disease being discussed but this text provides multiple clinical photographs. As the diagnosis of genital skin disease is primarily a visual skill, it is a joy to see such an array of excellent clinical photographs. Appropriately the commonest male genital diseases, particularly psoriasis, lichen sclerosus and lichen planus, have the largest collection of photographs. The author’s extensive experience with HIV-infected individuals is evident by the discussion of diseases such as seborrheic dermatitis of the anogenital region, not commonly seen in HIV-negative men. This text offers an excellent discussion on in situ squamous cell carcinoma of the penis, providing an historical perspective to the confusing clinical and pathological classification.

There are few faults or deficiencies with this excellent text but a few points are made, reflecting style rather than content.

The author states that in general penile skin biopsy 'is generally not as frequently needed as suggested, requested or performed'. Yet in the discussion on red patches and plaques of the penis the author acknowledges that difficulties may arise in differentiating such lesions. Chris Bunker's own extensive clinical expertise may have led him to an unrealistic confidence in the ability of lesser experienced clinicians to make an accurate diagnosis of male genital dermatoses. This is particularly true for pigmentary disorders of the penis. While melanoma of the penis is very rare, a genital skin biopsy of any irregular pigmented lesions should be strongly encouraged. In all clinical scenarios of genital skin disease, a genital skin biopsy is necessary whenever a malignancy needs to be excluded. The combined clinicopathological correlation is even more valuable in genital dermatology than in general dermatology. Probably more, not less, male genital skin biopsies should be taken by clinicians.

In the discussion of management of both in situ squamous cell carcinoma of the penis (erythroplasia of Queyrat and Bowen's disease) and extramammary Paget's disease, the use of topical imiquimod is omitted. Recent case reports support the benefit of this newer topical therapy for these diseases, with great patient acceptability.

Finally, listing references by the author's name within the text seemed to interrupt the flow of the text at times. The listing of references simply by number may have been preferable, but this is a style issue, rather than content.

The preface of this book states the intended audience is directed mostly to non-dermatologist specialists, general practitioners, primary care physicians and trainee dermatologists. In reality, this book is ideal for a much broader readership. This book is suitable for all medical practitioners interested in the field of male genital skin diseases, including specialist dermatologists.

This text is a 'must read' for all doctors in the field of male genital disease, from the interested general practitioner to specialists in this field. This comprehensive book should be on the shelf of all venereologists, sexual health physicians, genitourinary physicians and urologists, providing a better dermatological perspective of male genital skin disease. Practitioners working in this field from a surgical background (urologists, plastic and general surgeons) will find this book immensely helpful, providing a medical perspective to this vast field.

All dermatology trainees and specialist dermatologists should read this book as there is no current equal in the English press. More patients will present to dermatologists for help as the public become increasingly aware that dermatologists have perhaps the greatest expertise in the field of genital skin disease. This has happened in the management of female genital disease. This trend is not surprising as most diseases of the male and female genitalia are simply skin diseases.

This text is appropriately priced for such a comprehensive book full of colour photographs, functioning as both textbook and atlas, adding to its attractiveness to the interested clinician.

Anthony P. Hall