

# Foreword

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The ability to apply one's medical knowledge and clinical skills to the assessment and management of patients is the essence of competent medical practice. Though it takes most doctors a good many years to move from a level of basic clinical competence to one of mastery, the novice medical student is obliged to go through the painful process of acquiring basic clinical competence in the first place. Most of us doctors have vivid memories of the frustration that we encountered as junior clinical students when the confusion generated by a patient's story was compounded by even more confusing findings on clinical examination. How we marvelled at the ability of senior colleagues to ask the critical questions that we had failed to ask, to reach a provisional diagnosis based on this history, to seek and find the confirmatory signs on clinical examination and to establish the diagnosis in an apparently effortless way. Many of us will also remember the occasion when suddenly, the "lights went on" and for the first time, the presentation of a patient's disease made total sense and correlated with the pathophysiological description contained in the textbooks. It was that "Eureka" moment that convinced many of us that we possibly had what it takes to become a doctor after all.

At the time when I was a novice clinical student, I would have greatly valued having a text which demystified clinical medicine, which clearly described how patients should be examined and which related clinical signs to my rudimentary understanding of the

structure and function of the human body. I would have welcomed a text with a user-friendly layout, with clear diagrams and clinical photographs which added clarity and interest to the subject matter. I would have enjoyed references to relevant aspects of medical history. I would have appreciated a book that was rich in aphorisms, pearls of wisdom and humour. In short, I would have valued having access to Professor Kichu Nair's excellent book.

In taking the reader through each of the major body systems, this practical little book is reminiscent of a series of clinical bedside teaching sessions delivered by a number of charismatic and enthusiastic clinical teachers. The frequent presentation of clinical vignettes serves to ground the material in a real clinical context. This helps to link theoretical concepts with clinical practice. The book will help both novice and more senior students to develop and hone their clinical competence.

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Across the globe, institutions of medical education are improving the quality of their curriculum, while simultaneously focusing on the importance of patient-centered care. Healthcare has entered a new era and so must the tools that support clinical learning. The dramatic increase of knowledge, treatments and funding involved in healthcare over the last 50 years has presented enormous challenges. At the same time, the growing number of older patients and the typical complexity of their interacting conditions, acute and chronic, require healthcare professionals to achieve high levels of competency in treating older adults. No textbook of adult medicine is complete without special attention to this important and growing demographic imperative. Proficiency at history taking and physical examination remains as the foundation of effective medical practice.

This vibrant and comprehensive text provides the broad, fundamental knowledge and skills necessary to the practice of clinical medicine. Within the pages of this cheerful and engaging book, the authors present concise chapters covering the essentials of history-taking and physical examination in an organ system format. Interspersed throughout are pearls of historical and clinical wisdom to help the learner acquire new information with lasting connections to other knowledge domains. A colorful array of pictures depicting physical findings, radiographs, test reports, and other helpful schematics are plentiful throughout the book. Summary tables present useful information in a taut, easy-to-read format. *Kichu's Thoughts*

highlights key bits of clinical wisdom and project the feeling of bedside teaching rounds with an experienced, master clinician.

The importance of communication is a theme that weaves throughout the text and repeatedly reminds us that the patient is the center of our caring and practice. Without the patient as our focus, we are entirely without purpose or place. This theme is particularly germane to clinicians in the practice of caring for older persons, where values and preferences regarding healthcare treatments are as varied as the diverse and heterogenous populations of older persons whom we endeavor to serve. The final chapter is devoted entirely to the examination of the older person and makes this book a true treasure. Along with information about how to effectively conduct an examination of an older adult, learners are gently introduced to the plethora of physical findings that may be normal in later life. The importance of frailty and other geriatric syndromes is introduced, and the format of using a problem-oriented approach offers an efficient and practical method for assessment and treatment planning.

This book offers readers a joyous journey into learning history and physical examination. For experienced clinicians and teachers, this volume will revive us with reminders of the wonders of the human body and spirit. We are indebted to Professor Nair and his authors for a treasure trove of knowledge.

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