Book Reviews

**Atlas of Descriptive Histology.** By Michael H. Ross, Wojciech Pawlina, and Todd A. Barnash. Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates, Inc.; 2009. 159 pp. US $49.95 Paperback. ISBN: 978-0878936960.

The *Atlas of Descriptive Histology* is an extremely comprehensive and well-organized atlas composed of 159 photographed micrographs covering everything from basic tissue to full organ histology. In a clear, systematic fashion, the authors move from simple tissue structures to complex organ systems, including micrographs of the adult tongue, lip, teeth, eye, ear, and developing teeth.

Each chapter is designed to be easily understood and dedicated to a specific tissue, organ, or system. Furthermore, the chapters all consist of an explanation of the histology depicted in the micrographs. When necessary, a helpful orientation micrograph is included to familiarize readers with organization of tissue structure. Low to high magnification micrographs are incorporated as well, and key structures are highlighted to give readers a detailed understanding of histology.

Online access to the *Atlas*’ companion website is included with the book, and once on-line, the reader can access micrographs corresponding to those found in the book. Via an image viewer, pictures can be zoomed in and out, thereby allowing the reader to examine histology at specific magnifications. Images also can be viewed in labeled or unlabeled formats, creating a useful study tool for students.

The *Atlas of Descriptive Histology* should be on the desks of all students who need a comprehensive, easy-to-follow color atlas of histology. It is a well-written and organized atlas that covers the histology of all human tissues and organ systems. Additionally, the *Atlas* is comprised of detailed annotations of histological micrographs, high-quality images, and invaluable access to the companion website. Overall, the *Atlas of Descriptive Histology* is an outstanding color atlas that is an essential resource for students studying histology and a useful reference for any scientist or healthcare professional.

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**Clinician’s Pocket Drug Reference 2009.** By Leonard G. Gomella, Steven A. Haist, and Aimee G. Adams. New York: McGraw Hill Medical; 2009. 312 pp. US $12.95 Paperback. ISBN: 978-0071602808.

The *Clinician’s Pocket Drug Reference* is both extremely compact and full of information. The body of text contains an alphabetical listing of the generic names of the drugs most commonly encountered on the wards or in an outpatient setting. This formatting maximizes the amount of information in such a small book, while focusing on nothing but the most important information. Each drug has a brief comment on its uses, pharmacology, dosing, cautions, side effects, and other crucial notes. A big plus is the herbal section, which lists the medicines patients are most likely to try on their own, presented in the same layout as the rest of the book.

The front of the book also contains a broad list of drugs organized by category, which is more useful as a memory aid than for management assistance. The level of de-
tail is a little variable. If you want a third-generation cephalosporin, for example, you’re in luck, as the antibiotics are well organized. Looking for an SSRI? It’s somewhere in the antidepressant section. Antihistamines are also a single group. You must flip to the main entries should you forget whether a drug is for a runny nose or gastritis. The book does seem to have an internal medicine focus and covers those areas best.

In practice, this book probably will not help doctors choose a drug, but it will assist in the nuts and bolts of writing orders or prescriptions (which explains the book’s subtitle: the *Scut Monkey Drug Manual*). The appendix also includes tables for common, difficult-to-remember subjects such as steroid and anesthetic equivalents, a list of cardiac drugs, and anticoagulant goals. A benzodiazepine comparison chart would have been nice, but perhaps it will turn up in a future edition.

For its size, this book is a valuable resource. It takes up very little pocket room, and it is an efficient way to recall details about familiar drugs. Of course, one would need to supplement this book with a more comprehensive reference, but for quick prescribing on the wards or in an office, this book will make life a little bit easier.

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How Women Got Their Curves and Other Just-So Stories. By David P. Barash and Judith Eve Lipton. New York: Columbia University Press; 2009. 224 pp. US $29.95 Hardcover. ISBN: 978-0231146647.

Oscar Wilde once wrote, “Women are meant to be loved, not to be understood.” In *How Women Got Their Curves and Other Just-So Stories*, David P. Barash and Judith Eve Lipton counter Wilde and try to understand the mysteries of women. In the course of the book, they speculate about phenomena such as menstruation, orgasms, and curves. Although the premise of the book is interesting and the writing style inviting, the book suffers from an overemphasis on hot hypotheses at the expense of more logical ones and a general tendency to ramble too much without a cogent argument.

The book’s title derives from Rudyard Kipling’s *Just-So Stories*, a collection of tales to explain natural phenomena such as how leopards got their spots. Similarly, the husband and wife team of Barash (an evolutionary biologist) and Lipton (a clinical psychiatrist) seek explanations for uniquely female features and functions. As one example, they discuss the role and importance of menstruation, an important question that has received increasing attention recently due to the development of a birth control pill that reduces the number of periods a woman has in a year. Some people have expressed concerns that suppressing menstruation could have long-term physiological consequences (none have been reported so far, aside from an increased risk for blood clotting, while on most forms of birth control). Others, however, have argued that menstruation carries no clear biological benefits for women and it makes sense to dispense with the monthly discomfort. Barash and Lipton present several hypotheses to explain menstruation, but they seem particularly fixated on the possibility that menstruation serves to “cleanse” the reproductive tract of harmful pathogens. While the authors write honestly about the lack of evidence to support this idea, they undermine themselves by admitting that they favor it, despite its flaws. They reject an alternate and more plausible hypothesis, namely that menstruation occurs because it is metabolically inefficient to maintain a thick endometrial lining, because it does not “place the phenomenon [menstruation] itself front and center as the apple of evolution’s eye.” Evolution does not have an agenda, and this statement both misinterprets natural selection and suggests the authors are more interested in being trendy than accurate.

Subsequent chapters on invisible ovulation, the purpose of curves, the orgasm, and menopause follow a similar format with numerous theories being thrown around and discussed, some more substantively than others. Often, Barash and Lipton propose