Histopathology is a discipline that is central to disease diagnosis and management. It is disheartening, however, that so many undergraduate and postgraduate students in medical and allied sciences are not enamoured of this subject. Even among the laboratory sciences, many chose to pitch their tents in the more lucrative areas of chemical pathology, hematology and blood group serology or microbiology, which would enable them more easily to open a laboratory for private practice.

Admittedly, the first encounter with a dead body to be autopsied or embalmed may deter many who would otherwise have been inclined to pursue histopathology. As in many other developing countries, there is a dearth of up-to-date textbooks available to students in the medical sciences. Time-hallowed reference textbooks from developed countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, are imported at an exchange rate that places them far beyond the reach of the average student. In other cases, when the funds to purchase these books are available, the books are out of stock. This relative unavailability of textbooks places a strain on the students, teachers and researchers. These people must stretch their ingenuity to ensure that the standard of what is taught, and hopefully also what is learned, is on par with what their more advantaged colleagues in developed countries have at their disposal at a fraction of the expenditure in terms of money and time.

The book “Histochmistry and Tissue Pathology—Principles and Techniques” by Godwin Avwioro is, therefore, a welcome and timely addition to the compendium of textbooks for use by medical laboratory science students in Nigeria. The author is a seasoned teacher and examiner, currently based at the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital.

The book is organized into 13 chapters that cover in detail the basic principles and procedures for a wide variety of histochemical and tissue pathology techniques employed routinely in diagnostic histopathology laboratories. Appropriately, the first chapter outlines important safety procedures that must be observed in the laboratory. There follow chapters on microscopy, tissue handling and processing, and staining. There is discussion of the principles and staining procedures involved in cytology, as well as a chapter on special techniques including autoradiography, immunohistochemistry, and enzyme histochemistry. The histopathology laboratory worker must also be a chemist, and the book aptly concludes with a chapter on buffers, and includes an appendix with information that will be useful preparing laboratory reagents.

This book is directed primarily to students in the five-year Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science (B.M.L.S.) program and related courses, and top performers in the technician and assistant courses. It also will be useful to students undergoing the two-year postgraduate program leading to the award of the Fellowship of the Institute of Medical Laboratory Scientists of Nigeria (F.I.M.L.S.) and to Masters of Medical Laboratory Science (M.M.L.S.) students. It will prove useful also to postgraduate resident doctors in laboratory medicine as a reference textbook.

I recommend that this textbook be obtained by all academic and service histopathology laboratories and medical libraries in Nigeria and other developing countries to be used as a bench reference book and as a library resource. The book is well written, adequately illustrated, and it compares favorably with similar books emanating from India and the developed world. Mr Avwioro is to be congratulated on the May 2002 first edition of his textbook. The second edition will no doubt improve the first and is eagerly awaited.

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