Pocket Guide to Urology and Nephrology
Neville D Perera and Rushika D Lanerolle. ISBN 955-99520-0-5. 127 pp, Rs. 110.00

Sri Lanka’s western medical education cherishes a history over 150 years old. However, we still depend on western or Indian texts, as there are very few books written by local experts. In this regard the authors of this book should be commended for their effort to write a book in urology and nephrology.

The book’s stated objectives are to act as a pocket guide for medical undergraduates. To this end the book is successful, as the text is written with an uncomplicated approach using simple language. But there is evidence of inadequate proof-reading, and there are numerous spelling errors which make me reluctant to recommend it as a ‘must’ for every medical student. The text is supplemented by line diagrams and algorithms to put the reader at ease. The chapter on catheters is particularly well written; an area that is often poorly described in standard textbooks.

Although the book is primarily meant for undergraduates I feel that the contents are too much for a pocket guide as urology and nephrology constitute only a small fraction of the undergraduate curriculum. The comprehensive account might shadow the salient points that an undergraduate should know as a junior doctor. Hence I would rather recommend this book for postgraduate surgical trainees during the early part of their training. For them, it would be a useful and comprehensive guide.

Other than these minor criticisms, the book is a useful reference for every doctor. The book is very modestly priced. There is therefore no excuse for any doctor not to have a copy. Once they have invested in the book they will find it useful also in later life, and during their preparation for postgraduate examinations.

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Betwixt Isles: The Story of the Kandyan Prisoners in Mauritius
Hard cover. Pages 360

Until recently Professor Raja Bandaranayake’s fame mainly rested on the formidable international distinction he has achieved as a medical educationist, and a superb teacher of Anatomy. In both domains his services as a periapatic consultant were eagerly sought by, and willingly given to, organisations such as the WHO and medical and health-science schools world-wide. As an advisor he was learner-friendly, devoid of high-sounding jargon, and above all, sensible. In Sri Lanka he has guided all the state medical schools and the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine, often on several occasions at each place, to develop and implement curriculums and learner assessments along internationally accepted lines.

Now, with the publication of Betwixt Isles, Professor Bandaranayake has shown us glimpses of some other facets of his talent and skill. His book is the product of a prodigious exercise in historical research sustained over a 15-year period, entailing many visits to libraries and archives in four continents, and to the island of Mauritius, where Maha Nilame Ehelapola died in exile in April 1829.

The author writes that his first serendipitous encounter with the inscribed tombstone of Ehelapola in Mauritius had “a profound and lasting effect” on him, igniting a flame that has apparently kept burning vigorously through the toilsome and often dreary hours, days and months of labour demanded of any serious researcher into history. The opening sentence of his book, at once unembellished and sincere, tells us why the flame burned so bright for so long: “This book was born out of a deep love for my motherland, primarily inculcated in me by my parents”.

Betwixt Isles is an account of the life and death of Kandyan prisoners in exile in Mauritius between the years 1819 and 1834, a mere twinkling in the vast expanse of human history, but nonetheless a matter of consummate importance to us as Sri Lankans, when examined (as the author has done) in the context of the British capture of the Kandyan Kingdom in 1815, terminating one of the longest surviving kingdoms in the world at the time. The book has 25 compact chapters, 6 charts summarising facts