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| Author(s) | Yeung, C |
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Highlights from international workshops on therapeutic endoscopy (Hong Kong)

Ed: Lau YW, Sung JJY, Chung SC

Blackwell Science Asia, 54 University Street, PO Box 378, Carlton South, Victoria 3053, Australia

US\$120, CD-ROM, ISBN 0 86793 002 0

This CD-ROM package contains highlights from international workshops on therapeutic endoscopy held annually in Hong Kong. The package includes a collection of videos of 'live' procedures of gastro-intestinal endoscopy performed by local and international endoscopists. The two CD-ROM disks have multimedia features such as video clips, illustrative text, literature references, caveats, and practical tips. The topics covered include the most common endoscopic procedures encountered in a general hospital's endoscopy service, as well as more advanced therapeutic procedures such as endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP), sphincterotomy, stone extraction, haemostasis of bleeding ulcers, and stenting for oesophageal cancer. Other advanced procedures include endoluminal ultrasonography and endoscopic mucosal resection. The descriptive text is well edited and the subject content is well chosen. Disk 1 is solely devoted to ERCP procedures, while disk 2 covers endoscopic procedures of the oesophagus, stomach, intestine, and colon.

This CD-ROM package would be beneficial to a physician who has some basic training and experience in endoscopy, and it would certainly help improve endoscopic technique. The guidance from senior endoscopists would also help train nurses, since explanations are given as to how instruments work and what sort of instruments should be prepared for a particular procedure. Perhaps lists of instruments used in certain procedures could be included in the next edition, so that the database could be used as a quick reference guide. The text that accompanies each procedure is very concise, informative, authoritative, and without too much discussion on the associated controversies. References are given where necessary.

The video clips use QuickTime software (which is included in the installation program) and run smoothly on a Pentium personal computer (PC). They also run smoothly on a 486 PC with a 2x-speed CD-ROM, although the speed is slightly slower. There is a problem with the video clip on 'Histoacryl glue injection of gastric varices'—the narration is missing. The audio record-

ing for 'Balloon dilatation for achalasia' is also distorted. There is a lot of background high-pitched hiss in most of the video recordings, which may be due to the radio-frequencies generated by the endoscopic equipment; it would have been less disturbing if the hiss had been filtered out. The video clips are instructive, but the small-size screens do not reveal any detail. It is particularly difficult to see clearly the X-ray images, as well as endoscopic views within double-screen projections or picture-within-pictures. To overcome this problem, the '.mov' files can be accessed directly by using the QuickTime player for Windows.

The minimum hardware requirement is a PC, Pentium 75 MHz, 16 MB RAM, Windows 3.1/Windows NT, 4x-speed CD-ROM drive; or an Apple Power Macintosh, 16 MB RAM, Mac OS7.5 with QuickTime 2.0, 4x-speed CD-ROM drive. The enclosed instruction sheet is clear and straightforward. The 'Main Menu' lists the 'Table of Contents' for both disks and includes a brief introduction. However, it would have been helpful if the table of contents was printed either on the cover or on the CD-ROMs, so that particular topics could be sought without having to load the CDs. The style is consistent and aesthetic; the design is simple and extremely easy to use and navigate. The only precaution to be taken is to quit the program before changing disks, to prevent a computer malfunction.

The multimedia package is a useful reference work by experts in the field of endoscopy; junior endoscopists will find it very informative and senior endoscopists would find it a valuable reference.

Dr C Yeung
 Director of Endoscopy Service
 Department of Surgery
 The University of Hong Kong
 Queen Mary Hospital
 Pokfulam
 Hong Kong