Pathology of the Skin with Clinical Correlations on CD-ROM

One CD-ROM with documentation for both PC and Macintosh computers. Minimal recommended hardware configuration: Windows, 486 or later IBM PC or compatible computer, 2 MB hard disk space, 8 MB RAM, SVGA monitor, and Windows version 3.1 or higher; Macintosh, 68040 equipped computer, at least 2 MB available hard disk space, 8 MB RAM, and system version 7.0 or later. Mosby, London. Price: $380. ISBN 07234 2527 2.

Electronic textbooks are nowadays becoming more and more prevalent. They offer far more sophisticated search capabilities than any book-based method, with split-second retrieval time, compact storage, and text pasting and printing. Pathology of the Skin with Clinical Correlations on CD-ROM by Phillip H. McKee contains not only the full text of the equivalent hard copy, but also more than 3200 illustrations and photographic images, each accompanied by a concise legend.

Installation of the software is quick and straightforward. The main menu screen contains control and navigation buttons that lead the reader into the various chapters of the book. The software runs under Windows, offering the advantages of this graphic environment. The data can be accessed either by the index or chapter list or by search made using text strings (key terms or phrases). The presentation software included on the disk (Macromedia reader) is extremely user-friendly, so that even physicians without much computer expertise can operate it after a relatively short training period. At the same time, it is sophisticated enough to offer, in addition to a basic word search, such advanced features as electronic bookmarks, which allow the user to return directly to specific screens at any time.

Although on-screen images rarely match the quality of printed photographs or slides, those provided with this software are among the best I have seen. The images include both plain photographs and histologic sections and were found to be very clear and precise; however, the zoom feature is limited to only one magnification level, making the detection of small pathologies difficult.

In conclusion, this comprehensive package is a welcome addition to the dermatologic literature. The dermatologist can easily and quickly browse a topic in both office and ward settings, and medical students and dermatology residents will find the CD practical, visually pleasing, and enjoyable to use. The package performs very well on a Pentium-equipped PC. I would unreservedly recommend the use of this software to clinicians and researchers with an interest in the field of dermatology.

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