



Book Reviews

“*The Neurologic Exam*”

Review by Vincent Felitti, MD, Associate Editor

The Neurologic Exam is one of ten 90-minute videotapes made by Dr Martin Samuels, Professor of Neurology at Harvard University, who is a memorably fine teacher. The other titles in the series are *Dizziness*; *Headache*; *Movement Disorders*; *Stroke*; *Degenerative and Demyelinating Diseases*; *Coma and Other Abnormalities of Consciousness*; *Functional Neuroanatomy*; *Peripheral Neurology*; and *Seizures*. This particular tape is the most broadly useful in the series because it addresses a problem most of us have with neurology: we often do not effectively know how to obtain the history and basic neurologic examination results we need. Consequently, neurology referrals and MRI requests proliferate while our self-development stagnates.

Dr Samuels' explanations help us to understand the relation between and underlying rationale for the parts of a neurologic evaluation, and the relationship between those parts. He is an effective mime and often illustrates by mimicry the conditions he describes. He divides the neurologic examination into six parts:

- Mental status (psychiatric, neurologic)
- Cranial nerves
- Motor
- Sensory
- Coordination
- Reflexes

Dr Samuels pays detailed attention to the mental status examination as the first part of the evaluation; more important, he illustrates why it is necessary and how it is done. We are not shown the rote, embarrassing, and even demeaning mental status examination that most of us learned and hardly ever use; instead, we are shown a sophisticated and interesting evaluation process that is highly focused while readily passing for conversation. Dr Samuels' presentation of the cranial nerve evaluation makes us realize that, despite the stresses of medical practice, we can find moments of peace and pleasure through properly understanding the logic of the neurologic evaluation process.

The presentation was videotaped in a re-created office in front of a live audience. Unfortunately, the sound quality of the tape is at times imperfect, especially given the substantial price charged. Nonetheless, the tape enables us to share a fine teaching experience provided by an extraordinarily capable and interesting teacher. Whether you purchase this videotape or borrow it from a KFH library, *The Neurologic Exam* is likely to provide far more practical value than can be obtained from attending many hours at conferences or from reading textbooks. This tape exemplifies video-based teaching at its best. ❖

Video Textbook of Neurology for the Practicing Physician, The Neurologic Exam [video recording]. Martin A. Samuels, MD. Oxford, UK: Butterworth Heinemann; [Los Angeles, CA: Mayer Media] 1996. \$125. ISBN 0-7506-9763-6

“*Business @ the Speed of Thought*”

Review by Vincent Felitti, MD, Associate Editor

Many improvements to our practices have resulted from computerized information systems: E-Script, the wonderful pharmacy refill system; KPDS, the archaic but nonetheless valuable laboratory results system; and RTAZ, the radiology reports system. Electronic mail, too is improving the efficiency of consultation and patient communication for many of us as we learn to use it. Many physicians include e-mail addresses on their business cards.

These advances are important because the most troublesome of all problems we face in medical practice is not having patient information available when we need it. In our knowledge-based profession, who of us has not cringed at not having the medical chart when we see a complex patient, or at having to reorder recently done radiology or laboratory procedures because the results could not be located?

Business @ the Speed of Thought suggests the beneficial results that digitized information can bring to any complex human endeavor, including medical practice. The book gives clear examples of how successful companies use computers to integrate multiple activities. Many examples are applicable to Kaiser Permanente. For instance, why do we use lab slips instead of ordering tests directly from a computer screen, especially when test results are posted on a computer screen? Bill Gates frequently poses basic questions: “Do you have people moving information around, or do your computers handle routine process flow while people handle exceptions...?” (p 60). Translating these questions to our own clinical practice, we might ask: are our clinical guidelines still hand-delivered via interoffice mail when they could be placed in a digital library, where they would not be lost or discarded?

The book extensively discusses use of the Internet and leads me to wonder: How might *we* use the