

BOOK REVIEW

Colourful definitions

Dorland's illustrated medical dictionary. 30th ed. Philadelphia: Saunders, 2003 (xxvii + 2190 pp + CD-ROM, \$82.50). ISBN 0 7216 0146 4.

WHEN YOU'RE LOST for words or in search of medical meanings, you may find what you're looking for in *Dorland's illustrated medical dictionary*. Now in her thirtieth edition, this oracle — in print for over 100 years — must have decided that a double celebration was in order. She has reinvented herself, not only in technicolour, but also by gaining a web presence. Book purchasers are granted full on-line access to the dictionary at www.dorlands.com, as well as given a CD-ROM with the Dorland's pocket dictionary in personal digital assistant format and a spellchecker.

The colouring of *Dorland's* is not for show, but to facilitate ease of use. Headings are in red type, with the definition(s) following in black. Tables and appendices, and groupings like the syndromes and systems, are readily located within boxes with red borders and a pale yellow background.

The word “illustrated” is more applicable than ever before, with the dictionary's artwork undergoing a com-

plete revamp. There are now 600 colour photographs and nearly 500 line drawings, all in colour.

Dorland's “designers” (lexicographers), with the aid of 22 consultants from North America, have also reviewed her entire wardrobe of words. Obsolete items have been removed, definitions have been updated and expanded, and new words have been added.

In fact, the book has gained nearly a kilo in two editions, now tipping the scales at a little over 4 kg. The weight gain is partly due to the decision that she should embrace hundreds of terms from the increasingly popular fields of complementary and alternative medicine. Also contributing to the increase in size are new, updated and reorganised appendices, for example for cancer staging and symbols (such as the “shorthand” often used in clinical note-taking).

Those who remember this old girl with fondness need not be alarmed. She has retained her classic, signature style — an attention to accuracy and clarity and an authoritative tone. And, although her accent is North American, Australians should have little difficulty in understanding her.

In her class, *Dorland's illustrated medical dictionary* remains a firm favourite with the *Medical Journal of Australia* editorial team. Or, in other words, the old girl's still got it.

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