

THE STANFORD 25

"Clinical examination is something of an arcane art. It is a badge that defines a doctor. To an important extent, the process of history taking and physical examination is also able to be used as a vehicle to transmit that the doctor cares and wants to help ..."

Not only does the physical examination establish a connection between doctors and patients, it is part of a continuum linking them to clinicians of the past — clinicians whose names are enshrined in physical signs they were the first to describe.

But physical examination is under threat. Medical practitioners of the 21st century work in an increasingly time-poor environment. Gone are the days when clinicians were respected for the skill they brought to the bedside. The emphasis these days is on how many tests can be performed!

This threat to the physical examination recently prompted clinicians at the Stanford School of Medicine to develop the "Stanford 25" — a list of 25 technique-dependent, physical diagnostic manoeuvres that are now mandatory for trainees to learn. These include such basics as fundoscopic examination, pupillary reflexes, examination of the thyroid, liver and spleen, and elucidation of ankle reflexes in a recumbent patient.

All this takes me back some 30 years, when, as a research fellow at Duke University Medical Center in North Carolina, one of my tasks was to teach a semester devoted to clinical examination. Only then did I realise how well Australian physicians are grounded in the art of clinical examination throughout our undergraduate and postgraduate years. The skills imparted to us were light-years ahead of those learned by our counterparts in the United States. Even today, it is easy to distinguish the US from the Australian graduate by the latter's confidence and expertise in the skills of clinical examination. Let us hope that this continues, and we need never resort to protocols such as the Stanford 25.



Martin B Van Der Weyden

*Yeomans N. Foreword 1. In: Talley NJ, O'Connor S. Clinical examination: a systematic guide to physical diagnosis. 4th ed. Sydney: MacLennan & Petty, 2001.

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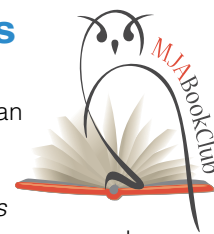
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January MJA BookClub Winners



Congratulations to Dr Gerald Fon, SA, Dr Warren Hargreaves, NSW, and Dr Ian Housego, QLD, who have each won their choice of one of two spiral bound chart books — *Diseases and Disorders* or *Anatomy and Pathology*. Thanks to everyone who purchased books from the January MJA BookClub. Pictured left is Joanna Katz, AMPCo's Data Production and Account Coordinator, who drew January's winners. For the latest and best from **all** medical publishers visit our secure online one-stop-shop at: <http://shop.mja.com.au>.



To find out about our great offers this month, see page 259 and the inside back cover of this issue.