

**Platzer W. Color Atlas of Human Anatomy, vol. 1. Locomotor System. 5th revised and enlarged English edition. Stuttgart, New York: Thieme; 2004. 462 pages; ISBN 3-13-533305-1 (GTV); price: €34.95.**

**Field:** Gross anatomy.

**Format:** Paperback.

**Audience:** This book is mostly intended for medical students, but it is also indispensable in the education of dentists, nurses, and other health care professionals. It may also be a valuable tool for a biology and biochemistry student, as well as a busy clinician who wishes to quickly review a particular anatomical topic.

**Purpose:** Brief and comprehensive review of general anatomy, anatomy of the locomotor system, and topographic anatomy of the peripheral nerves and vessels.

**Contents:** When I was still in medical school, I borrowed a copy of the Platzer's pocket atlas from a friend. On the cover page, she wrote – "anatomy, physiology – medical encyclopedia". Indeed, all three volumes of the Color atlas of Human Anatomy, written by the Austrian team of well-known anatomists – Werner Platzer, Helmut Leonhardt, Werner Kahle, and Michael Frotscher – provide an extensive review of the key concepts of human anatomy and physiology and are an excellent introductory text which will certainly make a medical student's life much easier.

The book is a bit smaller than a standard A5 paper format and will fit easily into most lab coat pockets. It is divided into six major sections, and equipped with a thumb index enabling the reader to browse through its content quickly. The format of the atlas is particularly didactic – each page showing excellent color illustrations is juxtaposed with a text page, describing the key concepts of each picture. The feature that I find particularly useful is "clinical tips", which will help the student to appreciate the clinical relevance of gross anatomy early in her or his professional education. In addition, frequent and important anatomical variations are also highlighted.

The readers familiar with the previous editions of the Platzer's color atlas will find several improvements in the current edition. First, the author has fully implemented the English form of the current anatomic terminology, *Terminologia Anatomica* (1). Second, quite a few new illustrations are included. In addition, numerous "clinical tips" will help the student

to start thinking in the terms of patient care from the first days of medical school.

The atlas is divided into three large sections. The first section, "General Anatomy", is the shortest. It starts with a brief introduction to the general anatomical terms and then gives an overview of the epithelial, supportive, and muscular tissue. The other types of tissue are described in volumes 2 and 3. The section is concluded by a description of the key concepts of osteology, syndesmology, and myology.

The second section, "Systematic Anatomy of the Locomotor System", comprises almost four fifths of the book. It is further divided into four sub-sections: trunk, upper limb, lower limb, and head and neck. The organization of each sub section is quite uniform. The author first describes the bones (including the ossification centers!) and then gives a comprehensive review of the joints in a particular region. The description of a joint includes quite a detailed discussion on the mechanics and range of movements as well as the biomechanical role of important ligaments. Additional structures, such as bursae and synovial pockets are also illustrated. The description of the muscles starts with a cross section of a particular region which is an excellent addition to the topographic part of the atlas. There are two features that I am especially fond of. Each muscle is not just illustrated, but Professor Platzer also provided schemes highlighting each muscle's attachments. These schemes will not only help the student to memorize the location of the muscle but it will also help her or him to understand the function of the muscle. In addition, the author also included diagrams showing the functions of groups of muscles acting on a particular joint. I hope that this will encourage the student to reflect on the clinical consequences of diseases and impairments of the muscular system.

The last part of the book, "Topography of Peripheral Nerves and Vessels" is simply a masterpiece and is second to no other anatomical atlas or textbook. Professor Platzer managed to summarize his remarkable experience in dissection and anatomy teaching in roughly 100 pages. The figures and descriptions which accompany them reveal the structure and organization of human body from the skin to the bones. By highlighting nerves and vessels, the author pro-

vided an excellent depiction of topographical relationships. This section is a "must have" for anyone trying to dissect a corpse but even more useful for surgeons.

**Limitations:** The only limitation of this atlas is the consequence of Austrian anatomical tradition. Namely, the book is focused on a skull as a whole and the skull bones are not illustrated one by one.

**Related reading:** The same publisher offers quite a few similar books: a single volume pocket atlas of human anatomy (2), a pocket atlas of radiographic anatomy (3), and a pocket atlas of histology (4). In addition, an atlas of topographic anatomy by the same author is also available (5).

### References

- 1 Federative Committee on Anatomical Terminology. Terminologia anatomica. International anatomical terminology. Stuttgart, New York: Thieme; 1998.
- 2 Feneis H, Daubner W. Pocket atlas of human anatomy. 4th ed. Stuttgart, New York: Thieme, 2000.
- 3 Moeller TB, Reif E. Pocket atlas of radiographic anatomy. 2nd ed. Stuttgart, New York: Thieme, 2000.
- 4 Kuehnelt W. Pocket atlas of cytology, histology, and microscopic anatomy. 4th ed. Stuttgart, New York: Thieme, 2003.
- 5 Platzer W. Atlas of topographical anatomy. Stuttgart, New York: Thieme, 1985.

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