

Schuenke M, Schulte E, Schumacher U, Ross LM, Lamperti ED. THIEME Atlas of Anatomy. General Anatomy and Musculoskeletal System. THIEME Atlas of Anatomy Series. Stuttgart: Thieme; 2006. 541 pages; ISBN: 313142081-2; price €59.95.

Field of medicine: Anatomy.

Format: Softcover atlas.

Audience: Anatomists, students of medicine, dentistry, and related health disciplines, orthopedic surgeons, specialist in physical rehabilitation.

Purpose: Presenting the principles of human body structure and functional and clinical anatomy of the locomotor system.

Content: The book is divided into four parts, covering general anatomy and the musculoskeletal system, with 1700 illustrations and photographs and over 100 tables. The section on general anatomy has eight chapters: phylogeny and ontogeny, overview of the human body, surface anatomy of the body and reference lines, bones and joints, muscle, vessels, lymphatic system and glands, and general neuroanatomy. The other three sections are dedicated to the three regions of the musculoskeletal system: trunk wall, upper extremity, and lower extremity. Each of these sections uses the combination of systemic and topographical anatomy in presenting the structure of the region. It starts with the description of bones, ligaments, and joints, then describes the musculature, first their functional groups and then their topographical anatomy, and closes with the description of the forms and relations and to-

pography of neurovascular system. The index at the end of the book allows easy orientation and search for structures and topics of interest.

Highlights: One of the greatest values of this atlas is its first part, dedicated to general anatomy. This important topic is often either missing or is presented as a very brief, first-few-page introduction to an atlas. Thieme Atlas of Anatomy has 73 pages of an excellent introduction to general anatomy. I recommend it especially to students, who most often plunge into learning systemic and topographical anatomy without understanding the body as a whole. Learning specific structures and their anatomical relations is much easier if students know how these structures and relations came about. For example, when they know that limbs develop as buds out of the body trunk during embryonic development, it becomes clear why the lumbar, and not sacral spinal nerves would innervate the toe. I found the section on the proportions, surface areas, and body weights particularly useful and unique among classical anatomical atlases. Knowing the normal body proportions, distribution of body surfaces at different ages, and body mass index is important for students. They will carry this knowledge into their clinical years, where they will know

how to implement it when calculating the body surface area for therapy or the percentage of body surface affected by burns.

Another great thing about Thieme Atlas is that it is not only an atlas – a collection of illustrations with brief legends, but also a good text-book. Not perhaps for a novice to the study of human anatomy, but a great resource for a student who has mastered general anatomy and basic concepts of systemic and topographical anatomy, and who has special interest in musculoskeletal system. It is a necessary reading for all health specialties which relate to the musculoskeletal systems: orthopedic surgeons, physical medicine specialists, physical therapists, sports medicine specialists, and many others.

Beautifully clear watercolor illustrations, with full detail of the structure, but simple and clear in presenting the structure of importance in individual figures, are a great tool for students to learn and for specialists to repeat the anatomical basis of the diseases and symptoms they treat. As a professor of anatomy, I find the sections on the three parts of the locomotor system particularly useful for teaching functional and clinical anatomy in modern medicine, as the watercolor illustrations and X-ray, computed tomography, and magnetic resonance images always emphasize the link between the anatomical structure and the living body. Also, graphs presenting the range of motions for particular joints, as well as

etiology and diagnosis of some common diseases of the locomotor systems are particularly useful in teaching and learning clinical anatomy.

Limitations: It is not possible to find limitations to the superb art of the illustrations and anatomical accuracy. From a standpoint of a specialist in this field, especially a resident or specialist in orthopedic surgery, presentations of common variations in the topography of the vascular and nerve supply to the locomotor system would be a good addition to the atlas. On the other hand, this would create confusion for a medical student, who is expected to learn the principles of anatomy, ie, most common or “normal” anatomy of the human body.

Related reading: As a seasoned anatomy teacher, my advice to the medical student would be to have a good, detailed, and comprehensive atlas, such as Sobotta Atlas (Urban and Fischer, 2006) to really learn human anatomy; to take a Thieme’s pocket atlas (such as Platzer’s pocket atlases) with them to the dissection labs, together with a good atlas of photographic anatomy (Rohen et al; Shattauer, 2002). When they learn the basics, specialized atlases, such as Thieme’s Atlas of General Anatomy and Musculoskeletal System will help them to really enjoy in the fascinating structure of the human body!

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