The subspecialty of head and neck radiology has matured on a gentler and separate course than the more dramatic fits and spurts that we have seen associated with the other neuroradiological subdisciplines, which focus on the brain, spine, and pediatrics. The field of head and neck radiology evolves largely as a separate specialty. Many handbooks, textbooks, and internet resources exist to help students of head and neck radiology better practice this craft. Is this book better? Does it meet an unfilled need in the practice of head and neck radiology?

Dr. Shah enlisted the aid of three neuroradiology colleagues in the formulation of this collection of 250 (100 in the book and another 150 online) educational cases that run the gamut of the different major head and neck categories. The cases are in the commonly seen format for these books of a selected small number of relevant diagnostic images (mainly CT and MRI) on 1 page with the diagnosis, annotated images, differential diagnosis, “essential” facts, imaging finding description, and pearls and pitfalls summarized on the following page. This format will be familiar to many diagnostic radiologists who utilized the Case Review Series as part of our Oral Board Preparations. The separation of the “blinded” images from the annotated ones and the discussion allows the readers to force themselves to identify the abnormality, consider the differential considerations, and then a most reasonable diagnostic thought before turning the page.

The case imaging and associated text are presented in a reasonably clear and concise format. The upside of this arrangement is that provided case information is limited to the pertinent facts leaving the casual reader faced with only high-level factoids related to a diagnosis. The downside of this format and length constraint is that more in-depth details and discussions are omitted. The more common diseases with clearly pathognomonic imaging findings are served well by this format, but for rare diagnoses and cases in which the imaging findings are not highly specific for a single diagnosis, this form suffers. There was at least a handful of cases where I thought the imaging favored something offered as a differential diagnosis and I was left a bit confused on why the authors felt their figures were pathognomonic for something else. A longer format book might help with this situation. Alas, given this is an educational book, both the patients involved and I survived unscathed.

Charts and tables are not provided in this format. Information is all presented in bullet-point format. One to 2 references are provided for each case in the back of the textbook. It is nice that these are provided, but it would also be more useful if they were provided along with each case to prevent significant page flipping. An index is also provided in the rear of the text with the case diagnoses listed in alphabetical format.

The strengths of this book are its thorough review of the more common head and neck conditions as imaged in the most commonly available modalities of conventional CT and MRI with the content in an easy-to-read format. Other strengths are the price and the easy-to-carry soft cover size. This book fits comfortably into a satchel or backpack. This text is a good value for the number of cases and breadth of material.

Weaknesses of this book are widely related to the chosen format. The book’s size and cost preclude the greater number of images and figures that you see in the StatDx books and also prevents the comprehensive text and references that you would expect from a textbook. This book also fails to highlight modern advances in diagnostic imaging, including the use of ultrasound, advanced MR and CT techniques, and nuclear medicine. The book focuses on routine CT and MR imaging that could have been acquired more or less anytime over the past 15 years.

Is this book better than other available texts? Does it meet an unfilled need? This is where I struggle. If a resident or fellow had access to a similar format older book on head and neck radiology, I would be at a loss to explain to them why they should buy this book. If one were in need of a casebook on classic head and neck radiology cases and would not miss the price of this book, then this is a good educational reference to have on the shelf.

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