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Kirollos Kamel is a third year student in Dunedin and is our book reviews editor; he has reviewed both books for us this issue. He has special interest in neurology and general internal medicine.

### Gastrointestinal System: Crash Course. Third edition Chew and Long. Publisher: Elsevier RRP: \$71.00

Medical students tend to forget very quickly, perhaps because of the large amount of new information they constantly have to take on board. Whether you are revising for an exam or just want to refresh your memory, "Gastrointestinal System Crash Course" will come to your aid! This member of the famous Crash Course series combines the core medical sciences of the gastrointestinal (GI) system, the main disorders affecting each organ, and common presentations of GI disease and how to approach them; all in to one convenient reference, saving you the trouble of searching through dozens of lectures and hefty textbooks to get the information you want.

The book is divided into two sections: the "core sciences" section and the "clinical assessment" section. The first section is divided into seven chapters, the first being a general overview, while each chapter after that covers a specific component of the GI system, from mouth to anus. For each organ, the chapter covers anatomy, embryology, histology, and physiology in moderate detail – just enough so you can keep it all in your head! The chapter then describes a number of common disorders of the specific organ, with a focus of the pathogenesis and, where relevant, pathology. Intestinal microflora are superficially covered in the chapters on small and large intestine, perhaps in less detail than you'd like even for a concise crash course. Pharmacology is generally spread out, with the exception of motility drugs being lumped together in the chapter concerning the large intestine.

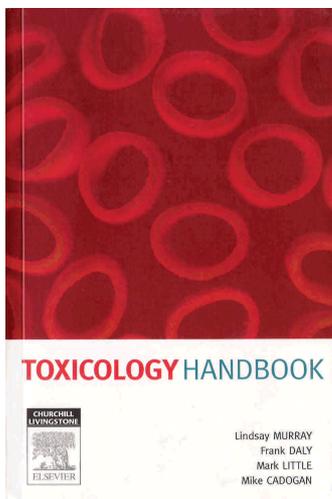
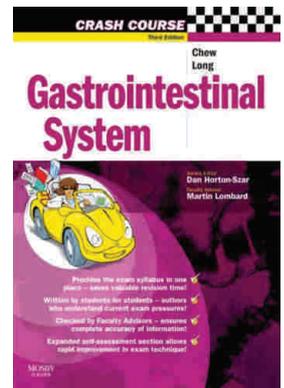
The second section is much more clinical, taking the common presentations of the GI disease & dissecting each of them in terms of what it means,

subtypes (where relevant e.g. in the case of jaundice) and how to investigate the presentation. Two features make this section highly attractive: the first is the tables comprising differential diagnoses for the commonest presentations including indigestion, nausea & vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain. Where the differential is limited, it is included in the text. The second feature is the use of flow charts to advise on how to handle each of these common presentations, including what to ask, what to do and how to treat. These flow charts provide a methodical and hence time saving approach, which allows for early diagnosis and intervention. The rest of this section covers history, examination, investigations and imaging of the GI tract. The coverage of GI imaging is relatively deficient; and endoscopy gets less attention that it should.

Like all members of the Crash Course series, the book ends in a self-assessment section, which allows you to test what you've learnt and consolidates your knowledge. The questions are in a number of different formats, and answers are included and adequately explained.

All in all, the book is a good way to refresh your memory on the GI system. Having said that, if you are approaching the book from a surgical or an anatomical perspective then you might be disappointed, because the book's coverage of anatomy is not extensive and the diagrams are generally oversimplified, especially with regards to the vascular and neural networks supplying the various organs. I would recommend that you use an anatomy atlas along with the book for more realistic representations and maximal benefit.

In conclusion, I recommend this book to medical students in general, as well as House Surgeons and General Practitioners. Remember though – it is NOT intended as a textbook on the Gastrointestinal system, but as a source of revision for someone with little time.



### Toxicology Handbook

Lindsay Murray, Frank Daly, Mark Little and Mike Cadogan  
Publisher: Elsevier RRP: \$82.00

When you watch 'House, M.D.' – do you ever notice how often they consider drugs and say to yourself, 'I wish I knew the side effects of all of these?' If your answer is yes, this book is the one for you. Written by experts in Clinical Toxicology, this text is as concise as it gets. It contains summaries about the most common drugs and toxins you will see in the ED. Presentation, diagnosis, management – this book has it all ...and more!

'Toxicology Handbook' is written in a style that befits a handbook! The first chapter covers general aspects such as how to assess a patient, resuscitation and what investigations you should order based on the authors' experience (they suggest, for example, an ECG and a serum paracetamol level for every patient). It also provides general guidelines on gastrointestinal decontamination and enhancing the urinary excretion of toxins. One thing it does not cover is how to elicit the history for each case. The authors assume that in the majority of cases the substance of abuse is found by the Paramedics at the site.

The second chapter introduces specific signs and constellations of signs and symptoms and focuses mainly on their management; rather than establishing a diagnosis, which makes sense considering these situations are emergencies. It also addresses patients with special circumstances such as pregnant women, children and the elderly. It suggests how the presentation differs in these groups and how the management may be made more suitable to improve the outcome.

The third chapter addresses an impressive list of toxins – ranging from common substances of abuse, such as alcohol and opioids, street drugs, and heavy metals to prescription medicines. Each substance is covered in terms of risk assessment, signs and symptoms of use/overdose, investigations, management and follow up. The organisation and level of detail is extensive (to say the least) and time-saving for the clinician who would like to look things up in case of an emergency.

The fourth chapter focuses on antidotes and is very MIMS-like in appearance with the advantageous addition of key points regarding the pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics of each agent.

The final two chapters focus on envenoming by snakes, fish and insects, with particular focus on species that are endemic to New Zealand, Australia and the South Pacific. An example would be the Australian Inland Taipan

Snake, whose bite contains enough venom to kill 150 human adults! The book deals with identification of the suspect animal from the appearance of the wound site, to management on site and at the hospital and antivenoms, making it valuable as an all round source.

Overall the book is excellent. It is packed with "Handy Tips" and "Pitfalls" reflecting the authors' vast experience in the field. The book is also very detailed when it comes to dosage calculations. Much of the information is provided in useful table form which is convenient. Unfortunately, the book does not deal with history taking or possible drug interactions very much, both of which can influence the patient's presentation. Finally, the references listed at the end of each subdivision of a chapter tend to annoy you after a while; perhaps the authors could have listed them at the end of each chapter.

In conclusion, I recommend the book to anyone who practises in an Emergency department, be it a House Surgeon, Emergency Physician or Nurse. Paramedics and Pharmacists would also benefit from reading it. The book is not suitable for pre-clinical medical students, who at this level need more theory and less technical detail. It also cannot be used to learn the mechanism of toxicity behind the various substances because this is not covered in sufficient detail.



**Who are we?**  
Grassroots is a student run rural health club at the University of Auckland with a mandate to raise awareness of rural health learning and careers.

**What do we do?**  
20+ events, all with the definitive Grassroots rural flavour. These include:  
Workshops and info evenings – e.g. 'Get Plastered'  
Weekend trips – e.g. 'Northland Weekend'  
Multidisciplinary social functions – e.g. Toga Party  
City vs. Country Sporting Tri-Series  
ROMPE student social events  
Rural Selective Scholarships – 4 x \$1000  
Conference Funding – e.g. RGPNC

**Membership**  
Since establishment in 2004, Grassroots has grown to a current membership of 600+ including medical,

nursing and pharmacy students. Membership is free and open to anyone with an interest in rural health.

**What are we trying to achieve?**  
By showing students how amazing rural life and careers are, more students will be interested in rural learning opportunities, and later, career opportunities in rural areas.

**Grassroots Rural Health Club**  
Email or visit our website for any further information:  
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