

Uses

What exactly do you do in it? Even if there is sufficient illumination, reading a newspaper is hard work as you have to keep it above water level, which can be tiring. A paperback might be easier, and certainly preferable to reading a book in a sauna, which is far hotter; I have tried that and after five minutes the glue melted and pages started falling out. But, if you wish, aquatic enjoyment can be further enhanced with additional optional gismos such as multiple water jets, bubbles, coloured underwater lights, various perfumes and fragrances, an integral fridge/icebox/mini-bar or – *get this* – a pop-up DVD/TV screen.

Personally, a glass of Chardonnay (red wine is not a good idea as it tends to get colder as

absolute zero beckons) and the refrains of Radio Five-Live's "606" Football Phone-In, is more than enough for me. Throw in (not literally, of course) *The Times* and a small cigar (did I say that?), and I am more than happy – and also able to keep my eye on my daughter Ellie as well, bobbing about as she does between her pink water wings.

Upkeep

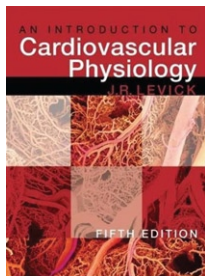
Maintenance? Well ... yes, of course, but less than you might think. The insulated cover reduces heat loss to a minimum so as to ensure a constant water temperature. In the 'hot summer months' (or that Sunday in late July, as we call it), we drop it down to 20°C, or so, in order to provide the odd cooling dip. Some slow-release bromine tablets every

few weeks, the odd chemical check (with test strips) and adjustment of the alkalinity/acidity, is about all the effort required. The filters might need rinsing every few months depending on usage, but I haven't changed the water in our tub for ... well, don't ask. Certainly, we haven't yet come down with malaria, leptospirosis or legionnaires' disease.

So, to conclude: a spa bath is undoubtedly worth the investment. The pay off is interpersonal harmony and utter relaxation, not to mention somewhere warm and cosy where you can be totally undisturbed – *usually*. However, unfortunately, not tonight. I will sign off now as Ellie is splashing water onto my keyboard and the screen of my laptop is steaming up ●

BOOK REVIEW

Book review



An introduction to cardiovascular physiology, 5th edition

Author: Levick, J Rodney
Publisher: Hodder Education,
 London, 2009
ISBN: 0340942045
Price: £29.99

This book attempts to "provide a comprehensive but accessible account of cardiovascular physiology". Pitched squarely at the medical student, it carries glowing reviews on www.amazon.co.uk but being text heavy with relatively small diagrams and a near complete lack of slides or photos, I put it to one side for a couple of days feeling I

needed to dedicate some time to get the most out of it.

On an afternoon free of lectures and other distractions, I looked at chapters 2-4 on the electrical properties of the heart and arrhythmias, an area where I've struggled before. J Rodney Levick does an excellent job of gently and logically taking you through the physiology. The text is succinct, detailed, clear, without being patronising, and flowed well. Any questions raised while making notes were answered in subsequent sections. There is excellent use of splitting the ample text into multiple headings making this an easy text to duck in and out of when going back for something specific.

Even though this book isn't marketed as an integrated clinical textbook, I was surprised and impressed by whole sections dedicated to pathological situations, such as systemic hypoxaemia and hypertension. The section on heart failure is especially good where the treatment is expertly related to the physiological principles and fills the gap sometimes found between academic and clinical texts.

Problem-based learning is included described by Levick as having serious drawbacks as well

as advantages. There are five well-written cases for students to apply their knowledge – the accompanying questions are challenging and definitely worth attempting.

Where the text goes above and beyond what is needed, I feel that the diagrams don't bolster it. Drawn all in the same colour scheme as the text (black and red) with no colour, I feel that they don't stand out from the writing or highlight and illustrate the important information.

Overall I feel that *An introduction to cardiovascular physiology* tackles the subject well with the text being the driving force behind the book. While not being an essential textbook every student should have, it is definitely tempting to any student interested in the area and worth hunting down in the library for your cardiovascular module.



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