

view of internal medicine. It promotes active learning, using patient presentations and thought-provoking questions to encourage deeper thinking about clinical problems. The format will be comfortable for anyone who has spent time on the wards learning from patients and engaging in problem-based learning. The introduction begins with an explanation of how to think clinically and to maximize the use of the content. Sixty cases are presented that cover a wide spectrum of commonly encountered diagnoses seen in both inpatient and outpatient settings. Each case presentation is followed by a prompt for the diagnosis and the next step in management or treatment. These are followed by discussions on pathophysiology and clinical management, several boards-style questions, and lists of clinical pearls that all serve to reinforce concepts for the student. The questions reflect what would be seen on shelf and USMLE exams, and the answer explanations are cogent and relevant, especially when used in combination with the topic reviews. References are provided at the end of each case for students who desire to study more in-depth material. Overall, the writing is simple and easy to understand, and the images, algorithms, tables, and clinical pearls emphasize key points that can easily be found for future reference. This book is highly recommended to supplement internal medicine clerkships and sub-internships and to prepare for shelf and USMLE exams.

Frederick Wang
Yale University School of Medicine

A Guinea Pig's History of Biology. By Jim Endersby. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 2007. 499 pp. US \$14.21, Paperback. ISBN: 978-0674032279.

If you have ever wondered why scientists use animals as models to study human development and disease, *A Guinea Pig's History of Biology* by Jim Endersby is for you. This exploration through the last two centuries of biological discoveries is a perfect read for anyone, scientist or not, who is

interested in how the study of plants and animals gives us so much knowledge about ourselves. Endersby begins his story with horse breeders who wondered how a horse's physical traits were passed on to the next generation. He then explains how Darwin and Mendel used passionflowers and peas to investigate this same question. Through each model organism, Endersby describes the political, ethical, and cultural influences that affected the state of scientific progress. As scientific discoveries developed, so did the ethical concerns associated with those discoveries. An understanding of biology led to the ability to use zebra fish to study human diseases like muscular dystrophy, but along with it came the creation of genetically modified plants and animals. Endersby leaves the reader to make up their own mind on when the use of animal models is good and when it has gone too far.

Jerrica Breindel
Yale University
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Department of Pathology

Icons of Life: A cultural history of human embryos. By Lynn M. Morgan. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; 2009. 310 pp. US \$21.95, Paperback. ISBN: 978-0520260443.

When we think of museums and collections, the first things that come to mind are stuffed animals and skeletons. But early in the last century, some researchers started to collect more unusual, controversial items: human embryos. Lynn M. Morgan, a professor of anthropology at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, visits one of these collections and uses it as a starting point for her fascinating and well-written book entitled *Icons of Life: A cultural history of human embryos*. In it, she tackles the heady questions of whether an embryo is a person, how pregnancy loss has been viewed, and why embryos provoke such heated reactions when the term itself was unfamiliar to most people a hundred years ago. This is not a book about the history of stem cell research

or the abortion debate, nor is it a developmental biology textbook, but rather it is a story of how meanings and causes have been imprinted on embryos by various cultures and groups over time.

Morgan's own interest in embryos appears to stem in part from coming of age during the Roe vs. Wade decision and from provocative discussions she had with subjects in Ecuador while doing field research. In Ecuador, she found that while women had varying views on the status of a dead or lost fetus, the fetus was not immediately linked with abortion in their minds, unlike for many Americans. This suggested that in spite of a single biological definition, there was substantial cultural variation in what an embryo is and how it should be viewed. Morgan decided that exploring embryo collections would be a good way to evaluate the cultural history of embryos in the United States. After laying out her motivations, Morgan introduces one human embryo collector, Franklin Mall, whose work helped legitimize the field of anatomy and contributed enormously to our understanding of human development. She then discusses the relationships that embryo collectors had with donors and their struggle to have a reliable, consistent source of embryos (which reflects upon the quality of prenatal care in the early 20th century as well as the causes for pregnancy loss). Perhaps the most moving and informative part of the book are the stories of individual embryos — how they were acquired, who studied them, and what they have taught us. The embryos are at once complex, sad, and edifying. Given the vast and diverse amount of material that Morgan covers, the book could have simply been a disjointed series of chapters. Instead, it succeeds in weaving together all of the above in a compelling way.

The book is thoroughly researched (with meticulous citations) and will be of interest to anthropologists, historians, and biologists. However, it also manages to be accessible to the more casual reader. By the end, Morgan presents a convincing argument that an embryo is much more than a biological term in a development chart. In

light of the recent and popular traveling *Bodies* exhibits, it is worth noting that human development is not just a biological study but also a subjective topic that reveals just as much about the motivations of interest groups and the views of society as it does about the subjects.

Saheli Sadanand

Yale Graduate School of Arts & Sciences

Oliver Wendell Holmes: Physician and Man of Letters. Edited by Scott H. Podolsky and Charles S. Bryan. Sagamore Beach, MA: Science History Publications; 2009. 274 pp. US \$35.00, Hardcover. ISBN: 978-0881353792.

The vast majority of discourse on Oliver Wendell Holmes is confined to Holmes Jr., the 20th century Supreme Court justice, rather than his father. In *Oliver Wendell Holmes: Physician and Man of Letters*, editors Scott H. Podolsky and Charles S. Bryan redress this imbalance, giving the author, medical scholar, and purported inspiration for Sherlock Holmes his due. Beginning with a series of essays on both the medical and literary legacies of Holmes Sr. and ending with an eminently citable collection of quotes, this volume gives thorough consideration to a man who was perhaps America's last great polymath-physician.

The reader will be surprised to learn about Holmes' legacy. Before Pasteur popularized his germ theory, Holmes investigated the role of contagion in puerperal, or "child-birth," fever; long before hordes gathered in front of pharmacies in central London to protest homeopaths, Holmes published scathing essays condemning homeopathy and its "kindred delusions." Furthermore, he is the only medical doctor to save not just a patient but an entire battleship — the USS Constitution — by penning a poem rather than a prescription. A descendent of Rabelais, who was a contemporary of Emerson and Longfellow, Holmes distinguished himself not only as a doctor but also as a best-selling author.

While a simple recitation of Holmes' many achievements would amount to a read-

Icons of Life tells the engrossing and provocative story of an early twentieth-century undertaking, the Carnegie Institution of Washington's project to collect thousands of embryos for scientific study. Lynn M. Morgan blends social analysis, sleuthing, and humor to trace the history of specimen collecting. In the process, she illuminates how a hundred-year-old scientific endeavor continues to be felt in today's fraught arena of maternal and fetal politics.Â Lynn Morgan's book takes the reader on a wonderfully eerie tour through the cultural history of a macabre science, that of collecting human embryos.