

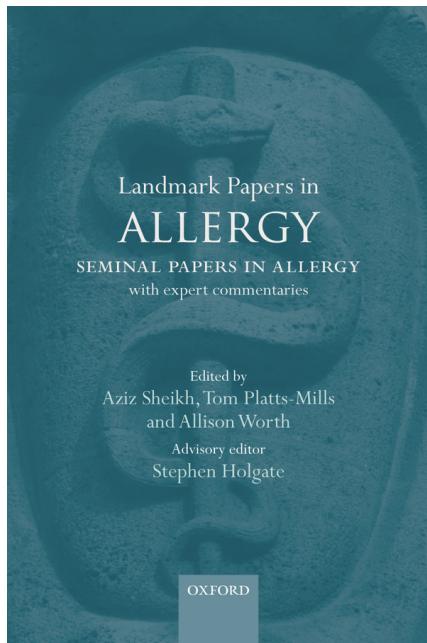
## BOOK REVIEWS

### Landmark Papers in Allergy

Edited by A. Sheikh, T. Platts-Mills and A. Worth

Published by Oxford University Press

Pages: 319. Price: £46.75. ISBN: 978-0-19965-155-9



Considerations for the history of medicine are multifaceted. Nowadays, the mistakes, biases, misinterpretations, unethical approaches and hypotheses look ridiculous and make it hard to teach medical students who are naturally more inspired by progress and understanding.

What I would call the “transitional years of medical practice”, *i.e.* the period following the completion of medical studies, may be the point at which to hear about the past and question how we came to be where we are.

“Confirmation” is the time to listen to the past and carefully read the subtleties hidden in old papers. Because less technology required more attention and precision of observation,

rediscovering how our peers reasoned is a large open source of data that is useful nowadays because it belongs to a more or less forgotten “clinical science”. Nowadays, understanding the mistakes of past experimentation is a rich exercise for scientists.

In this book, eminent senior contributors discuss seminal papers selected by the prestigious editorial team. Each seminal paper is recalled with a selected abstract and an appealing title. Four sections, each based on a different era, encompass 91 papers from Bostock in 1819 to Busse in 2011. Commentaries highlight why the selected papers are considered seminal, and why these contributions are of major interest in context. Finally, the commentaries are real lessons of medicine due to the implementation of current knowledge in allergy and immunology, which is actually an extraordinarily advanced field in basic science. These seminal papers mostly deal with clinical descriptions.

More recent papers considered as seminal and commented on in this book are discussed using the same criteria as older papers. Of course the paper selection is more subject to debate than publication date but, in fact, most of those selected are pivotal and famous within the respiratory field. The progression is easy to understand. Clinical descriptions, epidemiology, biology, and genetic and therapeutic aspects of allergy are displayed. The fascinating behaviour of our immune system, which is still progressing and potentially different to that described in the early 19th century, is followed through each chapter. The final impression given to the reader improves the realisation that human symbiosis within our environment depends on a perfect regulation of the innate immune system, which preserves the adaptive immune system engagement. These major advances will potentially affect how non-communicable diseases are managed.

Consequently, this kind of book should not be restricted to “confirmed” readers as it is a valuable learning tool for juniors. This book highlights why the history of medicine is not just for museum visitors but a legacy of valuable science.

**A. Bourdin**

Montpellier, France