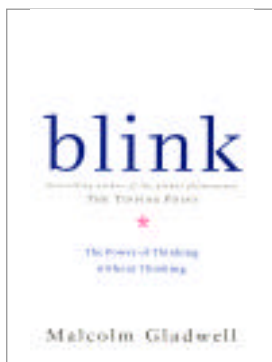


BLINK: THE POWER OF THINKING WITHOUT THINKING

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

Reviewed by Mohammad Wasay



Authors: Malcolm Gladwell

Hardcover: 288 pages

Publisher: Little, Brown and Company

Language: English

ISBN: 0 71 3997273

Malcom Gladwell's first book, Tipping Point was recommended to me by a friend and I loved it. His new book Blink is even more interesting. It is about the power of thinking without thinking. Many decisions in our daily lives are not based on a conscious thought process. We make spot decisions and quick judgments many times a day and we are usually right. The book not only discusses this phenomenon in detail by enumerating many examples and experiences, but also hints at the anatomical and biochemical basis.

It is suggested that this phenomenon is probably a medial frontal lobe function but is poorly understood and very complex. Many experiments have shown that the brain picks up minor changes in patterns and routine unconsciously, without classifying them as changes. We sometimes refer to this process as a "sixth sense" in common parlance.

The author has described Damasio's famous experiment of Iowa gamblers (published in Science), where gamblers were able to pick up minor alterations made to the cards as compared to non-gamblers. They were unable to figure out the alteration for sometime but were able to identify that there is some problem. This experiment explains the mechanism of unconscious thinking which sometimes works much faster than the conscious thinking process. He mentions observational experiences from a psychology lab where psychologists could predict the fate of a marriage by observing spouses' brief interaction and conversation with each other. The predictions are based on a 5-10 minute observation with high accuracy. These observations focused on some elements of interaction which they believe are predictors of marriage outcome.

The most interesting and informative chapter to me was when he describes an experiment about how behavioral priming could significantly affect performance and efficiency. He describes an experiment when young African American students are shown pictures of African American role model celebrities like Martin Luther King, Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, etc., before a test, they perform better on the test as compared to negative news about African Americans related to drugs, robbery and killing. This priming effect of news and pictures was a very strong predictor of test performance. The weaknesses of this spot judgment system are also discussed.

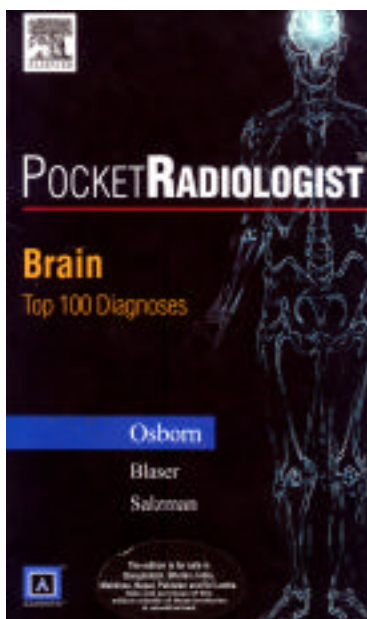
The point where most people make mistakes is the personality and look of the person. Gladwell quotes examples of a famous American president and some CEOs of Fortune 500 companies and discusses how people make common mistakes in judgment.

I feel this book provides good insight into behavioral neurology or psychology. It is based on experiences that happen to everybody, but Malcolm Gladwell has given a language to it.

POCKET RADIOLOGIST - BRAIN: TOP 100 DIAGNOSES

BY ANNE G OSBORN

Reviewed by Zafar Sajjad



Author: Anne G osborn

Paperbag: 302 pages

Publisher: Amirsys

Edition: 2003

ISBN: 0-7216-9708-9

This is by no means a literary masterpiece. The book form is very similar to the also available software version (available for PDAs in Palm and Windows OS) consisting primarily of bulleted lists. This is one volume in a multi-part series, aimed primarily at residents in radiology; but this volume will also be of interest to neurologists and neurosurgeons in training.

The text is organised into 11 sections ranging from trauma to congenital disorders, covering the more common aspects of the practice of neuro-radiology. The individual chapters are short and to the point, pertaining to one of the selected 100 diagnoses. However, they cover all key aspects of the particular diagnosis being discussed, including pathology and clinical issues. These are particularly useful for radiology trainees as it gives them a much needed insight into patient management issues. The images are small, in keeping with the format of the book, but of excellent quality and illustrate the relevant findings. The text is authoritative and is followed by a short list of selected references. Although 'only' 100 diagnoses are covered, the list is such that residents at least will rarely come across something not covered by this book.

Edited by Anne Osborn, one of the giants in the field of neuro-radiology, this short book enhances her reputation even further. Large parts are written by her and appear to be a condensed version of a larger text also written by her. This is not meant as a criticism but as a recommendation. The edition being reviewed is printed by Elsevier in India and is available in Pakistan for around Rs.600, making it affordable even to the poorly paid (and over-worked) residents.