

# Self-Assessment in Dermatopathology

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An essential examination resource for anyone sitting their primary or maintenance of certification examinations in dermatology, pathology or dermatopathology, *Self-Assessment in Dermatopathology* uses histopathology as a catalyst for constructive and critical thinking and to trigger relevant clinical, genetic and syndromic associations.

Concise explanations at the end of each chapter give short answers to each question and expand on each answer choice. Each chapter consists of an increasingly difficult selection of questions, allowing the reader to develop and self-test their knowledge. Tables relevant to the section covered have also been incorporated in the answer section. Using this practical approach, the reader will become familiar with the pathologic basis of clinically relevant dermatoses and cutaneous tumors.

The question and answer format make this book the first resource of its kind. Thinking about information in a new way is the foundation of this book, making it an invaluable addition for any trainee.



# Self-Assessment in Dermatopathology

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For Acca, with love, always



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## Foreword

For those trying to learn dermatopathology, the subject too often seems like an enigmatic maze of terminological difficulties, diagnostic conundrums and controversies involving an endless list of entities. Although several textbooks and monographs have tried to deal with this formidable challenge over the years with varying levels of success, there has been little attempt to publish a self-assessment tool in a textbook format which allows the reader to both review and acquire core competence skills in dermatopathology. *Self-Assessment in Dermatopathology* by Dr. Mahalingam is a timely addition to the dermatopathology repertoire whose primary and novel objective is to assist trainees and experienced practitioners in preparing for either primary or maintenance of certification examinations respectively, in dermatology, pathology and dermatopathology.

Covering a wide range of cutaneous infections, non-infectious inflammatory dermatoses, skin tumors and other conditions including pigmentary disorders and genodermatoses, *Self-Assessment in Dermatopathology* incorporates the clinicopathologic and basic science aspects of most of the common conditions one is likely to encounter in routine dermatopathology practice. It uses the time tested multiple choice question format, challenging the reader with a question (accompanied by a high quality representative photomicrograph where appropriate) and a set of options. The layout of the corresponding answer section is unique as it starts with a general summary list of relevant entities, key histopathologic features and helpful clues in a richly illustrated and user friendly tabular layout. This is followed by a discussion centered on the correct answer which also touches upon how the incorrect options were excluded. I believe this format of providing a summary of the core issues at the outset and then following it up with a brief discourse on individual conditions succeeds in reinforcing key information in a persuasive manner.

It did not take me long to convince myself that *Self-Assessment in Dermatopathology* is much more than simply an essential examination resource. Numerous tables and explanatory comments pertinent to the answers of the multiple choice questions provide a treasure of information which educates, inspires and encourages the reader not only to learn but also to think critically about specific conditions and beyond. Some of these “gems” flagged up in sections with headings like “short guide,” “cheat sheet,” “at a glance” and “quick recap” will no doubt catch the reader’s attention and imagination. Given the wide range of entities covered, I will not be surprised if trainees find additional use of this volume as an easy reference to look up practical queries during daily sign outs.

Those like me who have had the good fortune of knowing Dr. Mahalingam as their mentor or colleague will be able to establish a connection between the underlying spirit of this book and her indomitable energy as an enthusiastic, passionate and inspirational teacher. Through a systematic, logical and morphologically sound approach, she has successfully created a resource which is not only an excellent learning and self-assessment tool but also a delight to read. No matter how far up the learning curve a student is, one is sure to learn something new by reading *Self-Assessment in Dermatopathology*. I look forward to the publication of this text and wish it all the success it truly deserves.

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*Assessment* is defined as “an appraisal or evaluation (as of merit).”<sup>\*</sup> To assess the self occurs when one looks inward to evaluate his or her knowledge and to determine whether he or she is fit for the challenges now and in the future. It is an intensely personal evaluation.

It is no secret that dermatopathology is one of the most challenging fields in all of pathology if not all of medicine. Its roots are in general medicine, dermatology, and pathology; however, it has evolved into an exacting discipline in its own right. Those who practice it are inundated daily with scores of conditions – common and rare – that must be accessible immediately by dint of one’s experience or by one’s ability to access the information in journals or books (or both). If one is fortunate, one has access to an experienced colleague to facilitate the connections.

Having known Dr. Mahalingam for close to two decades, having worked with her in committees in the American Society of Dermatopathology, as well as discussing ideas in dermatopathology with her, she’s the real thing. She knows the field, and knows how to teach it to others, which – you might be surprised to learn – are two rare abilities made rarer, still, when they occur in the same person.

As challenging as the discipline is, there is something for everyone here, from medical students, to residents, to fellows, and to seasoned dermatopathologists. This is a book of vignettes on related themes, of questions followed by tables

(which are extremely useful; look at tables G8 and H11 for just two of many practical examples), with relevant high quality photomicrographs, and with answers that include some exposition. It is not necessary to begin at the beginning, although it enhances the experience by moving through it in sequence. Yet, conversely, part of the fun of this work consists in discovering, serendipitously, “gems” within the tables and the explanations of the correct answers to the questions. I have no doubts that some will disagree with some of the conclusions presented here; this is not an impediment but a valuable aspect of the book. This book is a tool for thought and is one of many reasons why Dr. Mahalingam’s work is so important.

Why, then, are you considering any longer what *I* have to say about this book? You have it in your hands; all you need to do is open your mind to its many “pearls.” *You* can now decide for *yourself* how useful it is.

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\* “Assessment.” *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged. Web. Accessed May 2, 2018.*

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## Preface

Through a style emulating the traditional style of standardized examinations, this book uses histopathology as a tool to trigger associations. The questions are not meant to be actual examination questions but to serve as tools for study as well as a catalyst for constructive and critical thinking about topics covered. The reader is not supposed to know all the answers (or else there would be no need for this book!). The concise explanations at the end of each chapter give short answers to each question and expand on each answer choice. Tables relevant to the section covered have also been incorporated in the answer sections. Using this approach, the reader will become familiar with the pathologic basis of most clinically relevant dermatoses and cutaneous tumors.

### Author Credentials

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She currently serves as the Section Chief of Dermatopathology for VA Consolidated Laboratories, New England.

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