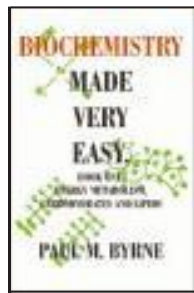


## Biochemistry Made Very Easy, Book One: Energy Metabolism, Carbohydrates and Lipids

Paul M Byrne

Parkland, Florida: Universal Publishers/uPUBLISH.com, 1999  
ISBN: 1581128045



The benefits of being a non-clinical medical student are very much underestimated, especially if you are one. If posed a clinical question by an overzealous clinical lecturer, as part of the next generation of interactive lectures, all one has to say is, "I haven't

got the foggiest about what you are talking about, as my clinical experience is non-existent." However, given that so many medical schools are adopting a more clinical based curriculum, this excuse is running short. So I guess I will have to grin and bear it.

The same cannot be said for marathon biochemistry lectures. Yet, the last thing I expected was to gain any help from this American question and answer book on biochemistry. Which, the author assures us, is "different from all other biochemistry textbooks." It attempts to explain the principles of pathways through questioning the reader on his or her current knowledge on the fundamentals of biochemical pathways and then providing the model or true answer. The questions are actually not too dissimilar to those that one may be asked in an exam situation.

This method of learning allows the reader to access the raw knowledge required for the comprehension of a topic. It is from the "no frills" school of biochemistry. So all you need to do is learn the answers to the questions and relax. Well, not quite, although the questions do guide you through the core structures and pathways. The book does not, however, provide you with sufficient knowledge to work things out from first principles. Which can pose problems if you are faced with questions requiring more in depth knowledge of a topic.

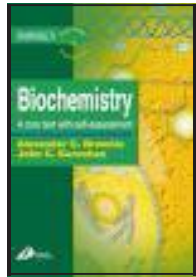
In all, this is a good book to learn and go, and it should be taken in moderate doses during a revision epidemic. Yet, it should be used to reinforce core principles, rather than for more in depth further reading like a textbook.

## Biochemistry

Alexander C Brownie and John C Kernohan

Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1999;  
£15.95  
ISBN: 044305693

Churchill's "mastery of medicine" series



continues with this simple but effective textbook. The topics are set out from a systems based outlook. So at least when attempting to learn the biochemistry of the endocrine system, I learn just that. With medical students in mind, it also provides information

applicable from a clinical scenario. Which means there are far fewer pathways to learn—hoorah! Yet for me the best parts of the book were the self assessment multiple choice questions and questions with short answers at the end of each section. These not only enforced what I had learnt from the concise text and numerous diagrams, but they also allowed me to appreciate the level of understanding required for that topic. The explanations were comprehensive but easy to understand, with particular attention being paid to developing the reasoning behind specific pathway routes.

The short clinical notes at the end of each chapter were another neat extra, providing good examples of how to use your new vocabulary in real clinical situations, rather than when just showing off to your friends. My only criticism would be the fairly dull and uninspiring presentation of the book. They say that dark grey and silver are the new colours for men this season, but I doubt that this applies to textbooks, especially those concerning biochemistry.

A very good book that certainly answers a lot more questions than it asks. Effectively produced with medical students in mind, but make sure you buy plenty of multicoloured pens to help stimulate the visual cortex.

Rameen Shakur *second year medical student,  
University of Sheffield*

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## "n0lse: transforming sensation" at the Wellcome Trust's Two 01 Gallery

The self consciously 21st century title of this exhibition puts it into that bracket of corporate sponsored contemporary art occupied by Saatchi's protégés and the contents of London's Millennium Dome. The blurb contained abstruse phrases alluding to the "sounds of colours and the shape of taste." What's more, it promised to connect art and science. Few exhibitions have managed to meld what is essentially art with the essence of science without resorting to Dadaism (a vacuum cleaner on a stand) or microscopic images. Therefore I approached this exhibition with some cynicism.

The exhibition consisted of eight disparate pieces relegated to the lobby of an office building. Ominous sci-fi muzak pervaded the space. There were the usual suspects—images of microbes and an electron microscope of a ladybird. A three dimensional polystyrene "photo" encouraged visitors to explore images through the hands of blind people. Another notable piece was "White Noise," several scrawled notes pasted on a board to represent the "conversation" of a deaf person. The notes belong to the deaf artist, and for the morbidly curious it was an irresistibly cryptic vignette of the artist's life. On an artistic level it showed the inadequacy of the written word in replacing the spontaneity of verbal communication and how uneasy the crossover between the senses can be.

The most eye catching exhibit was not so much a work of art but a working experiment: "Talking Heads." Coloured shapes were arranged on a white surface. A "robotic" installation was able to visualise these shapes and conceptualise each shape verbally. The robot does not have a pre-programmed language but communicates what it sees with similar installations through the world by internet. Can the robots cooperate and share their words? Will a dominant cursory language arise from the robots' word games?

For those who can move beyond the Turner-Prizesque feel of the gallery, "n0lse" is worth a visit. For me the most informative piece was pencilled on a napkin and attached to the "White Noise" board:

"Do you know what LL Cool J means?  
Ladies Love Cool James."  
I have always wanted to know that.

Sripurna Basu *third year medical student,  
St Bartholomew's and The Royal London School of  
Medicine and Dentistry, London*

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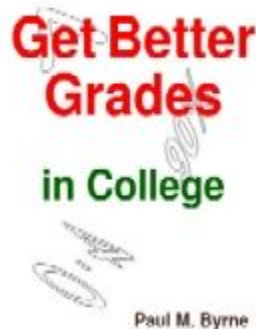
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