

Invisible Light: The Remarkable Story of Radiology

By Adrian Thomas

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This book traces the evolution of medical imaging since Röntgen's discovery of X-rays in 1895 to the digital era and the emergence of the speciality of radiology. The title alludes to an early description of X-rays. The subtitle sums up the journey from simple X-rays to MRI and the wide range of advances and personalities involved.

The author is an acknowledged expert in the field, in addition to having experienced many of the changes at first hand as a working radiologist. Many images used in the book are from the author's personal collection.

Early chapters describe developments following Röntgen's discovery with emphasis on the pioneers and the rapid establishment of the new departments, the impact of X-ray imaging on anatomical interpretation, the dangers in X-ray departments and tubes, plates and screens.

Chapters follow on image guided intervention, contrast media, tomography, C.T. and MRI. Ultrasound and radionuclide imaging are not included. In the final chapter, the author gives a thoughtful look into the future. Each chapter is followed by an extensive list of relevant references.

A feature is the international perspective in the story. Additionally, there is a strong biographical element, an example being a whole chapter devoted to the women who played important roles in the establishment of medical imaging. Controversies associated with advances are part of the history and examples such as the attribution debate surrounding the invention of MRI are fully discussed.

The transition from the analogue to the digital era is well described including the bewildering number of techniques that became obsolete due to advancing technology.

The print quality of some of the images does not always match the excellence of this book. Sections on ultrasound and radionuclide imaging would be useful additions in future editions.

This important book is likely to become a key reference source on the emergence of medical imaging. It will appeal to the radiological and wider medical and scientific community and for those who wish to 'dip in' for specific information. Some elements will appeal to the public, although the terminology and technical aspects may be challenging.

Michael Collins
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