This comprehensive book looking at the ever changing subject of Clinical Negligence is an essential guide for anyone involved this field. The book is edited by Dr Michael Powers QC, a medical practitioner and Master of the Bench of Lincoln’s Inn; Dr Anthony Barton, Solicitor and Medical Practitioner; and the late Mr Nigel Harris, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon. It is contributed to by 76 eminent legal and medical experts making this an unparalleled resource. Each chapter provides an authoritative and unique insight into the subject matter discussed, and the topics range from the basics of negligence claims, through to risk management, the regulation of the medical profession and the issues of clinical medicine. Although aimed at those with an interest in the field, it is well written and caters for individuals with a limited knowledge of the subject.

The new addition has made way for 15 new chapters, evenly divided with 25 legal and 31 medical chapters. The textbook provides an overview of the law and on the risks associated with a vast array of clinical specialities. The table of statutes and cases at the beginning provide a useful quick reference guide, and the text is comprehensively and well referenced throughout. Each chapter opens with an introduction followed by easy to read smaller sections, which creates for simple reference and allows the reader to dip in and out of the text. Catering for the IT age, the book is accompanied by a CD-ROM containing the main text and therefore allows for reference anywhere.

What makes this book so different is the incredible overview and range of topics covered. Often texts focus on the theoretical law, but Clinical Negligence gives a step by step guide of how to put theory into practice. Taking account of recent statute and case law, it is an essential tool to anyone working in this field. There is in depth discussion about the laws governing medical practice which has been updated since the last edition and a stimulating chapter on the impact of the Human Rights Act 1998 by Philip Havers QC and Rachel Marcus. Unfortunately, as with any text it is impossible to be up to date in an ever changing world, with notable absences of reference to the Corporate Manslaughter Act 2007 and the soon to be implemented Mental Health Act 2007.

Such a text would not be complete without an in-depth look at the civil procedures in relation to medical negligence claims. These chapters provide an essential guide to legal advisers, and they help to explain the theory behind the practices.

For doctors who find themselves subject of a claim, may find this a useful reference book to understand what happens behind the scenes and could assist in realising that such action is usually not intended to be a personal attack of their reputation or skill. Through these chapters there is also helpful information on the roles and responsibilities for those undertaking expert witness work and it takes the opportunity to look at notable cases such as that of Meadows.

Unfortunately, clinicians do occasionally find themselves under scrutiny during criminal investigations associated with incidents related to clinical practice, and this topic is not covered. There is however, a detailed chapter in relation to Coroner’s inquests, explaining the process and procedures involved. With an emphasis on case law which has shaped the conduct of such inquiry, this proves to be an essential guide to anyone involved.

Clinicians too will find this text useful and interesting, as the second part of the book looks at individual specialties. Of note, and unusual in such texts is a unique look at the medical defence organisations and is written by Dr Priya Singh, Medical Director of MPS. Practitioners may find this overview of great value in understanding how the organisations of which most are members throughout their careers function, and endeavour to protect their professional interests. Medical regulation too, is a topic of general interest gaining increasing exposure in the media, and this book tackles organisations involved in professional governance; the GMC, and NCAS warranting a chapter contributed to by Sir Liam Donaldson and Professor Alastair Scotland. Further, there is an emphasis on risk management and clinical governance which is often lacking in other law texts.

However, this text book does not and indeed should not deal with ethical issues in totality. The consent chapter does open with a brief look at the issues which are raised, but this text aims to give absolute answers and addition of convoluted ethical arguments would confuse the purpose, and make the book simply too long. There are other texts which deal with these separately.

As a reference textbook, although expensive, it is unparalleled. This is a well written, exhaustive text on clinical negligence and is recommended for anyone working in the field of medical law. Clinicians too will be impressed by this easy to read thorough guide and contributions by distinguished peers.