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Jon Anders Halvorsen

Huden er guden [Skin is king]

364 pp, ill. Oslo: Kagge Forlag, 2018. Price NOK 399

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Huden er guden [Skin is king] is literary non-fiction that might also be described as practical literature. Jon Anders Halvorsen, a dermatologist, takes us on a journey from the fertilisation of the ovum, through fetal stage development, to how and why the skin functions. We learn about symbiotic relationships and the interaction with other vital organs, as well as gaining a historical insight into why the human body is the way it is.

The introduction arouses our curiosity by presenting us with reflections on the importance of the skin, why we are created with skin, and why it is so essential to take care of it. The author then describes for us how skin is formed, and its composition.

Using plain, everyday language the author attempts to provide readers with an understanding of the introduction, which is essential for further understanding of the topic.

The book contains several high points. It clarifies ancient myths, why and how particular diagnoses got their name, and where new research and the myths of antiquity have intersected and paved the way for today's treatment models. Amid a plethora of diagnoses, an attempt is made to simplify these aspects for the reader.

Finally, we are given a review of the skin's normal function at all stages of life, as well as diseases based on the body's chronological age. However, the conclusion is somewhat abrupt.

The book is clearly set out and easy to read, requiring no special baseline knowledge. Nevertheless, some topics may be difficult to understand, especially for young readers. The language is relatively simple, considering how many topics and diagnoses are addressed and discussed. Medical designations are often placed in parentheses, making it possible for readers to find images or further information as they wish.

The book's strength lies in the author's own experience, spanning many years as a dermatologist, and it is easy to see that the author possesses solid clinical and historical knowledge. He gives a detailed description of physiological processes in all types of skin, and explains the skin of various ethnicities, not only white, but also black, light brown and brown skin. Aesthetic treatments and new trends in treatment with laser, botox and 'fillers' are discussed in an informative, non-stigmatising way.

The book is written for a wide general public and is equally suitable for 'ladies who lunch' and for brawny plumbers.

Having reflected on the content of the book, I must say that I agree – skin is king!

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