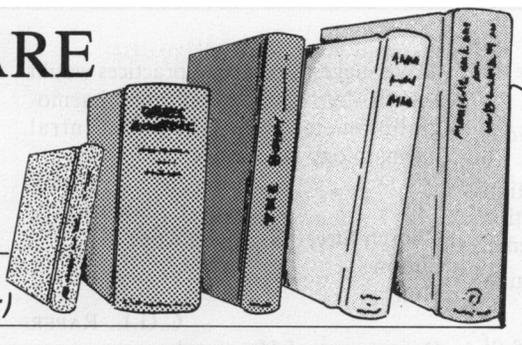


PRIMARY CARE BOOK SHELF

NIGEL STOTT (Reviews Editor)



ROISIN PILL
A. FINLAY
R.J. ROBERTSON
H. CHADDERTON

POLITICS, SOCIETY AND PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

A review. Occasional paper 6

Alfred Yarrow

The Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust, London (1986)

58 pages. Price £5.00

TERMINAL CARE AT HOME

Oxford general practice series 10

Roy Spilling (Ed)

Oxford University Press (1986)

153 pages. Price £10.50

TEXTBOOK OF PSORIASIS

Paul D. Mier and Peter C.M. van de Kerkhof

Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh (1986)

292 pages. Price £45.00

COMMONSENSE PAEDIATRICS

Margaret Pollak and John Fry

MTP Press Limited, Lancaster (1986)

270 pages. Price £34.95

PAEDIATRICS

Management of common diseases in family practice

A.N.W. Evans and C.A. McCarthy

MTP Press Limited, Lancaster (1986)

160 pages. Price £17.50

THEMES IN NURSING

Research for practising nurses

Vera H. Darling and Jill Rogers

Macmillan, Basingstoke (1986)

78 pages. Price £4.50

'Prevention' has been busy shaking off its worthy but rather dull connotations and emerging as the vogue word in much of the recent writing about primary care. Nevertheless, the debate grows as to what exactly preventive medicine means in the context of general practice and what, if anything, should be done. *Politics, society and preventive medicine* is a timely review from the Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust which should serve as a reminder of the wider context of preventive medicine.

As an ex-senior principal medical officer in the Department of Health and Social Security with over 30 years experience of public health behind him, Dr Yarrow is in an excellent position to take a wide view. His message is that preventive action is limited by political considerations and that reformers must learn to live with this and indeed to exploit it. Much of the book is taken up by a series of case studies illustrating this theme and these would make salutary reading for those convinced that the limited advances in preventive medicine during the last few decades are due to an unholy alliance of vested interest and government inaction.

In the analysis of the battle against cigarette smoking and

alcohol it is made quite clear that the 'conspiracy theory of history' is naive and oversimplistic. In Dr Yarrow's view a major part of the problem lies in fragmentation within the government. Various government departments have different priorities and goals and these inevitably affect the way policy is formulated and implemented. Dr Yarrow also feels that health promoters may often underestimate the genuine unease that many politicians, as well as citizens, feel at interfering with the liberty of the individual.

Possibly the most interesting sections for those concerned with change are the discussions on the role of pressure groups and the analysis of why some health issues cause governments to take speedy action whereas other issues can apparently be tolerated for long periods. Dr Yarrow points to the need for the establishment of the right climate of opinion in society and to the need to convince those health and education professionals in direct and frequent contact with the target group of the benefits of preventive medicine.

Both those committed to prevention in primary care and those who are sceptical of what can be achieved will find something in this slim volume to challenge their beliefs and to stimulate thought.

R.P.

Terminal care at home is the tenth book in the Oxford University Press series for general practice. Edited by a general practitioner with a special interest in terminal care, the book has eight chapters written by five distinguished Oxford professionals together with the ubiquitous Prue Clench. The theme of the book is that most terminal care can be conducted very well in the patient's home. In the first chapter Roy Spilling draws a useful analogy between what has happened to home births and what is happening to home deaths as technology and institutions begin to displace many of the psychosocial advantages of family-centred care. He also uses research into the consultation in general practice and Nagy's analysis of children's concepts of death to produce a sensitive chapter on communication.

The development of home care services in the UK is skilfully reviewed and the chapters on symptom control, home nursing, hospice care, the dying child and postnatal care provide good reviews by specialists in their field.

This is a compact yet comprehensive book which many people will find a useful addition to their libraries as it has contributions from a generalist and a specialist in medicine as well as a theologian, two nurses and a very practical mother superior.

N.C.H.S.

Textbook of psoriasis has a glossy, grey-yellow cover, excellent photographs and clear, interesting diagrams. Mier and Kerkhof have regimented the styles of 19 authors into a cohesive non-overlapping book in perfect English.

The book has three sections which cover clinical aspects of psoriasis and its pathogenesis and therapy. The clinical section discusses all the aspects of psoriasis encountered in practice and also provides a well-referenced review of psoriatic arthropathy. Psychological aspects are discussed and the chapter on the doctor-patient relationship controversially suggests that copies of all the correspondence between a dermatologist and a general practitioner should be sent to the patient to aid communication. There is also a fascinating critique of psoriasis associations throughout the world — the Swedish association has 22 000 members but the Italian association only 458.

The major methods of psoriasis treatment are well described but crude coal tar, messy but effective, has no section of its own. One chapter is a manifesto for the topical steroid party; 'Corticosteroids remain central to the management of psoriasis' may be true but I disagree with the implication that this is either an acceptable or optimal management strategy. Happily the next chapter redresses the balance, giving practical details of the use of dithranol. This book helps solve the question 'What would I give for this patient's scalp psoriasis?'

The reviews of major systematic treatments including PUVA and etretinate are well written and there is a brave attempt to compare the effectiveness and side effects of different therapies. Some of the confusing combination regimens are described — the six major different therapies give a possible 120 potential pairings.

The central section of the book concerning the cellular and molecular aspects of psoriasis should not be skipped. Van Erp and Mier argue that in molecular terms psoriasis results from a disorder of communication. The cell kinetics, ultrastructure and immunology of psoriasis are also presented with liveliness, communicating successfully the enthusiasm of the authors.

At least nine of the 17 chapters are of direct clinical relevance to general practice and this book has an advantage for British readers in that it gives a European viewpoint. Psoriasis is a fascinating disease — dip into this book and you may agree.

A.F.

Commonsense paediatrics is an excellent guide for all those involved with the care of children. The authors have broken their subject down into six sections — first principles; behavioural and developmental problems; common clinical problems; society, family and community; 'uses of ...' (drugs, paediatric clinics, and so on); the whole child.

In the section on first principles, the authors make some important points rarely brought out in other texts. Is the child really ill? How ill? What is wrong? (but not necessarily having/giving a definite diagnosis). Can the child be managed at home? When should the parents contact or see the doctor again? The authors remind readers 'Not all families are like your own and your own family behaviour might not be the best. Therefore do not judge others by your own standards. Understand and respect each individual and family lifestyle and milieu.'

In the section on behavioural and developmental problems the wide range of normal and abnormal behaviour is discussed, giving practical guides to be followed, for example a sequence of questions if a child is not walking by the age of 18 months.

The common clinical problems are dealt with under a series of headings — What is the condition? What is its natural history? What is its importance? What to do? There is frequent reference to the basic principles, for example re-examining a child with stomach-ache. The chapter on divorce and separation in the society, family and community section provides particularly good advice.

There are occasional clumsy phrases and unclear paragraphs but overall, this is a well laid out book which is easy to read, with many useful tables and figures and a large number of well-

illustrated cases. The 'commonsense' of the title somewhat belittles the content as the authors show more than 'ordinary, normal or average understanding' (*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*) of their subject and how to put across to others their experience of 'more than 60 joint practice years'.

Unfortunately, however, few parents, nurses, health visitors, general practitioners, community physicians or paediatricians are likely to be tempted to buy this book at a price of £34.95.

R.J.R.

Paediatrics is part of a series aimed at giving practical advice on the management of common problems met by family practitioners in their work. The co-authors are a specialist and a family practitioner bringing together their experience from district general hospital and family practice.

The book opens with chapters on the child as a patient and common problems of child development. Then follow chapters on the snuffly child, infectious diseases in childhood, immunization, stridor and croup, urinary tract infection, asthma, fits, gastrointestinal disorders, diabetes mellitus, joint pain, mental handicap and child abuse.

There is excellent concise advice on management, for example advice on sleep, feeding and toilet training in the section on the common problems of development. The chapters on asthma, fits, diabetes mellitus, joint pains, mental handicap and child abuse are particularly well set out with useful guides to the best management approaches. There is an important reminder of tuberculosis in the chapter on infectious diseases in childhood.

The editors' forward states 'The series is intended for family practitioners — the young and the less than young'. However, this text on paediatrics contains much material which is so elementary that one would be disappointed if it were not known and practised by the vast majority of practitioners, perhaps even medical students. There are few illustrations and the chapter on infectious diseases in particular would have benefited from more.

Undoubtedly this book contains a lot of helpful advice, but few practitioners will be likely to spend £17.50 on a copy for themselves.

R.J.R.

Readers of this *Journal* might be surprised to learn that there are now some three dozen universities and polytechnics in the UK offering bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees in nursing; and scores more who welcome nurses who wish to study related subjects such as education, psychology and sociology.

One of the effects of nurses raising their professional status and questioning conventional wisdom is a proliferation of books such as *Themes in nursing*, *Research for practising nurses* which is written by two well-respected nurses who held senior positions in management and research with the former Joint Board of Clinical Nursing Studies.

The book follows the steps of the research process in its five short chapters and its strength is its well-illustrated down-to-earth approach to the subject, and the good use made of the small amount of British research into nursing practice. The final chapter on the use and presentation of statistics is particularly well-written.

The book's principal shortcoming is that the authors have chosen not to describe action research on the grounds that the method is too complex for inclusion. I feel that where evaluation and change go hand in hand action research is potentially the most rewarding for a profession at our stage of development.

Despite this criticism, I would recommend the book, especially as preparatory reading for those nurses contemplating higher education for the first time.

H.C.