

This is a beautifully produced book, generously illustrated by excellent photographs which have not lost their detail or colour in reproduction. While this is a book likely to be of special interest to dermatologists and geriatricians, it would not be out of place on the bookshelves of the many general practitioners who look after substantial numbers of elderly patients.

DUNCAN H. MCVIE
General Practitioner, Edinburgh

DEALING WITH DRUGS

Helping the problem drug taker

Annas Dixon

BBC Books, London (1987)

208 pages. Price £7.95

The breadth of experience of this author must make her one of the best placed people for writing a book about drugs and drug users. Her considerable exposure to various facets of the problem and, judging by the acknowledgements, to most of the best known professionals in the field make her a mature and perceptive commentator. The aims presented in the introduction — to 'help social workers and other professionals to plan effective work with problem drug takers' and to 'offer insights to the families and friends of drug takers' — are adequately achieved. With a refreshing confidence arising from first-hand experience the possibilities are explored and realistic guidelines suggested. The text is easy to read and gratifyingly free from the lapses into street jargon, common in books about drugs, which date books so rapidly.

The short chapters are easy to assimilate and the few useful case summaries are well selected and varied enough to demonstrate the diversity of possible responses to any situation. Owing perhaps to the author's social work experience, the concentration on support and non-professional agency work makes the book particularly useful for medical students and doctors who tend to have tunnel vision when it comes to problems with no tangible treatment or obvious potential for cure. The pieces on assessing the problem and achieving longer-term goals are particularly relevant to those of us who tend to give up on drug takers when they relapse back into drug use.

The author may have made a definite decision to avoid the medical complications of drug abuse in the main part of the book but the problem of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) is not mentioned until page 150 and only included in passing in an appendix. Although AIDS may indeed be a passing symptom of drug abuse it will undoubtedly change the number of deaths in drug users over the next decade and have a considerable impact on the management of the problem.

J. ROY ROBERTSON
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AIDS

The acquired immune deficiency syndrome (2nd edition)

Victor G. Daniels

MTP Press, Lancaster (1987)

188 pages. Price £11.95

This is the second edition of a book which was first published only 18 months ago. The rate of progress in the epidemic of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and in the knowledge about the infection are such that a third edition will need to be published soon. Despite this rapid expansion of knowledge, basic information about the virus and its early epidemiology are essential for doctors. This simple, straightforward account gives doctors a basic knowledge of the subject to enable them to better understand new information and ideas about AIDS and HIV.

There are a number of books now about AIDS. Doctor Daniels has written sensibly and lucidly on a complicated subject.

E. GRAHAM BUCKLEY
Editor of the Journal

CLINICAL RHEUMATOLOGY

International practice and research, April 1987: pain

Verna Wright (Ed)

Bailliere Tindall, London (1987)

214 pages. Price £17.50

In the first book in a series, Professor Wright has drawn together a dozen writers to produce a comprehensive review of the subject of pain in rheumatology patients. Following traditional medical teaching he begins with the anatomy and physiology of the pain pathways and in subsequent chapters deals with the biochemical background of the perception of pain. To the average general practitioner this is heavy going but serves as a real update on the exciting research that has taken place in this field in the last 10 years.

I feel that the most helpful chapter is on the drug treatment of chronic pain. We all see ourselves as experts in this field and yet here we are offered clear guidelines on the best use of the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and the latest ideas on using the second line antirheumatic drugs. Steroids, except by the intra-articular route, are now relegated to the third division.

The methods and organization of a pain clinic are well described in the next chapter, providing a fascinating insight into the available techniques. I also enjoyed the chapters on the surgical and psychiatric management of pain. For the general practitioner with an interest in rheumatology this book is to be recommended.

MARTIN BARKER
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A HANDBOOK FOR MEDICAL TEACHERS (2nd edition)

David Newble and Robert Cannon

MTP Press, Lancaster (1987)

157 pages. Price £12.95

This delightful book fulfils its purpose admirably. Written in a clear and easy style with humorous illustrations it offers practical help and advice to the medical teacher, backed by full explanations of educational principles, using a minimum of jargon. The chapter headings, the use of bold print and the general layout enable topics to be read up easily and quickly with a guide to further reading on each subject.

A range of teaching techniques from formal lecture to buzz groups are mentioned, along with course planning, assessment, use of teaching aids, and even a chapter on preparing and reading a scientific paper. Here the teacher can find ideas and support when he feels lost and incapable. However, there is much more to this book — the need to define carefully and clearly the educational task and how best to achieve it, always keeping the needs of the student in mind, is an underlying theme demonstrated well in the book itself.

The particular skills and problems of postgraduate vocational and continuing education, and one to one teaching, are not mentioned (could they be chapters in future editions?) but undoubtedly trainers, course organizers, general practitioners and clinical tutors, and indeed anyone concerned with education would find this book refreshingly helpful and stimulating.

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