

conclusion are less than convincing. They ask readers to accept the occurrence of a series of increasingly unlikely turns of political and economic events, all of which are assumed to evoke no response from interested parties such as governments and the pharmaceutical industry. I note that the book was supported financially by the British Pharma Group.

Despite these criticisms the book will be of considerable interest to medical advisers, of some interest to dispensing doctors and pharmacists, but of only limited interest to ordinary general practitioners.

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OXFORD TEXTBOOK OF CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY AND DRUG THERAPY (second edition)

*D G Grahame-Smith and J K Aronson
Oxford University Press (1992)
756 pages. Price £25.00*

This excellent, readable book integrates pharmacological theory with practical details of drug therapy, medicines regulation and prescribing.

The first of four main sections is a comprehensive 200 page review of the scientific base covering adverse reactions and interactions, patient compliance, use of placebos, and the process of drug discovery, development and regulation, as well as the more usual summary of pharmacological mechanisms and theory. A second section of only 18 pages deals with the principles of prescribing and includes a useful bibliography of sources of all types of information about drugs. The third, 300 page, section is the usual account of specific drug therapies, by body system and therapeutic group, but is described particularly well. The last section of 189 pages is an idiosyncratically arranged pharmacopoeia, more suited to the revision needs of medical students than to the haphazard requirements of day to day clinical work.

This is the only problem with an otherwise excellent text; it is primarily written for medical students, and while many general practitioners who have a particular inclination will find it a fascinating and contemporary account of clinical pharmacology, it does not have the overwhelming relevance to day to day care which most hard-pressed practitioners are likely to require from an ideal reference text. Nonetheless, it is a model of how a comprehensive specialist text should be written and produced.

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COMMUNITY BASED TEACHING

*Angela Towle (ed)
Kings Fund Centre, London (1992)
62 pages. Price £8.00*

The need for more teaching of medical students to take place in the community setting is now widely recognized and has been reinforced by the General Medical Council. This is a reflection of the large proportion of health care that is now provided outside hospitals, as well as of the need for the undergraduate curriculum to address a broader range of objectives than hitherto. Angela Towle's work at the Kings Fund Centre has provided a valuable stimulus for developments in this field. She has recog-

nized the danger that developments in community based teaching could become rapid responses to short term problems rather than, as they should be, part of an overall plan for curriculum development in response to health care need.

In July 1992 a conference was held at the Kings Fund Centre where those involved in teaching in the community had the opportunity to share their experiences and to discuss selected projects. New areas for development were highlighted and possible constraints were addressed. This report presents, in a clear and concise way, the presentations at this meeting and the philosophy underlying them. The experiences of community teachers and medical students enrich these reports by providing practical and day to day illustrations of what is trying to be and what has been achieved.

Anticipated problems have been considered, in particular how community based teachers provide the time for their teaching responsibilities and how they need to be appropriately remunerated. The benefits from the greater integration of the efforts of hospital and community based teachers are also highlighted. This is a problem that runs throughout all stages of medical education, including vocational training as well as undergraduate education.

This most welcome publication brings to a wider audience the issues addressed at the 1992 conference, with practical examples of how success can be achieved. All involved in medical education, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, will find much of interest in the book. It should provide a valuable catalyst to discussions between hospital based and community based teachers and should be considered in detail by the curriculum committees of all medical schools.

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COUNSELLING IN GENERAL PRACTICE

*Roslyn Corney and Rachel Jenkins (eds)
Routledge, London (1993)
119 pages. Price £9.99*

This is a neat little book edited by Roslyn Corney, senior lecturer at the Institute of Psychiatry, and Rachel Jenkins, medical officer at the Mental Health, Elderly and Disability Unit at the Department of Health. The book focuses on one of the most controversial issues in general practice, namely counselling. Through its 10 chapters, the book explores what counselling is, how it differs from communication skills and whether or not it is better than any other method of management of emotional problems experienced by patients in general practice.

Since each chapter is written by a different author, the style and quality are inevitably variable but, on the whole, impressive. I liked the chapters on the ethics of counselling, practical and training issues, and evaluation of counsellor placements. Disappointingly, of the two chapters written by general practitioners, one appeared too elementary and the other too verbose.

The chapter on the effectiveness of counselling, though interesting, seemed to offer little evidence to support the value of counselling in general practice. It would have been interesting to know whether the brief counselling practised by some general practitioners is any better or worse than that offered by trained counsellors.

Despite some reservations, I think the book is useful and deserves a place in the library of any general practice.

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