

judgements. A court held that the manifestations of life are being preserved rather than life itself (how does one define the distinction?). Is artificial feeding an aspect of medical treatment rather than a distinct duty? The doctors' mistake may have been to assume that acting in good faith and in accordance with the promptings of conscience would protect them from the rigours of the criminal law.

In summary, the book offers an absorbing set of essays, which provide an excellent starting point, fully referenced, for someone who wishes to pursue the academic, practical and moral arguments surrounding euthanasia, letting die and the moral duty. But what about buying it? It is a must for the hospice library and could usefully be in the hospital library, but it is probably not for the average practice.

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ARTHRITIS AND RHEUMATISM

A Calin and J Cormack

Churchill Livingstone, London (1996)

196 pages, price £10.95 (pbk)

ISBN 0443049882

Musculoskeletal pain ranks second only to respiratory symptoms as a reason for consultation in primary care, yet doctors enter practice with little schooling in its practical management. Will this book help to transform practices into active pain management centres, buzzing with optimism, diagnostic clarity and therapeutic activity? It seems unlikely.

The authors' hearts are in the right place. They try to shift the balance towards common pain syndromes (back, hip, shoulder) and away from disease labels. Discussion of drug therapies is balanced by practical sections on simple exercise regimes. Investigations are reviewed with suitably critical eyes. Yet there is a constant and confusing lack of clarity about the diagnostic priorities and therapeutic options which could or should be followed in primary care itself, as compared with what is on offer at the local rheumatology department.

The clue to the problem lies in the style. Despite co-authorship by a rheumatologist and a general practitioner, most chapters appear to have been written by the former in relentless first-person singular. This is a book about the rheumatologist's approach to musculoskeletal pain — corticosteroid injections constantly to hand, early referrals always an option. This means that it is predictably strong on inflammatory disease and rheumatological emergencies, but should rheumatologists really be the first port of call for the patient with back pain?

Psychosocial issues — a dominant feature in chronic musculoskeletal pain — are barely mentioned. The epidemiology in the book is hospital-based and misleading for a general practice readership (for example, most people over 45 years in practice populations do not have OA of the hip).

The front page hints at the troubles to come. The title refers to the craft of the rheumatologist and not to the primary care problem of musculoskeletal pain and its management, while the level of proof reading in the book is helpfully signposted by the publishers' inability to spell their own name correctly.

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INTERACTIVE DEPRESSION DIAGNOSIS AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

*Developed and produced by the Department of Psychiatry, Southampton University, and supported by Lundbeck Ltd, 1996
CD-ROM package provided free of charge by Lundbeck Ltd*

This innovative training scheme, which has been developed by the University of Southampton's Department of Psychiatry under Professor Thompson, with the support of Lundbeck Limited, was launched in January of this year.

The system is designed for small group teaching and is made available to GPs and other interested groups by trained facilitators drawn from general practice and psychiatry. It is not available for sale but a free structured training session can be obtained by registering with Lundbeck on 01908 649 966.

The teaching vehicle is a simulated consultation between a general practitioner and a mother who seems angry that the cream given to treat her son's eczema was 'useless'. Her manner is the clue to her own depressive illness, which is the hidden agenda of the consultation.

The user puts questions to the patient and directs the consultation, deciding whether to invest time in obtaining further information regarding medical history and physical health, or to move on to diagnosis and treatment.

Many hours of video recording and text can be accessed, providing a wealth of teaching material regarding the recognition and management of depression. Those involved should be congratulated on the quality of this teaching aid and on its imaginative nature. It seems likely that we will see many more similar systems used for medical teaching in the next decade.

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AUDIT IN PRACTICE

Authors

RCGP, Exeter 1996

77 pages, price 14.95 (spiral bound)

ISBN 0850842239

This book offers 24 previously tested packages that cover a wide range of subjects of interest to general practitioners, and would also be of value to doctors in other specialties. Topics include patients' notes, drug management, equipment, logistics, immunization and communication.

The chapters all have a common structure that includes an introduction, a description of the system under scrutiny, the aim of the audit, criteria, standards, methods, results, action and a review. Simple forms are outlined for the collection of information and results.

The basic principle is to review the criteria and standards before repeating the procedure. The great appeal of this system is that the details and criteria are set by the medical team and not by any authoritarian external body. Such personal involvement is essential to successful audit. It is hoped that the accumulated results of these audits could be published for the wider readership.

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