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# BOOK REVIEWS

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## ORAL DISEASE

C. E. Renson

*Update Publications Limited  
London (1978)*

81 pages. Price £6.20

Previous reviews in this *Journal* of books concentrating on disease of the mouth have included a *Colour Atlas of Oral Medicine* and a *Colour Atlas and Textbook of Oral Anatomy*, both published by Wolfe Medical Publications. It is therefore against this standard that this new book from Update Publications must be judged, as there is some overlap between the different texts.

I liked this book because it was short and to the point. The 81 pages included a large number of clear diagrams and good photographs in colour. The five-page chapter on orthodontic disorders by Mr P. Vig is a valuable summary, and the majority of the conditions described and illustrated have been appropriately selected.

The main advantage of this text is its price: at £6.20, post and packing free, it is probably the best buy currently available.

D. J. PEREIRA GRAY

## ABUSE OF ALCOHOL AMONGST MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS

*N. H. Rathod, Sir Dick Caldwell and Max Glatt (Eds)*

*The Society for the Study of Addiction, 3 Grosvenor Crescent,  
London SW1X 7EE (1979)*

30 pages. Price £2.00

In 1911, doctors died from cirrhosis (which is accepted as an indicator of alcoholism) with a standardized mortality of 114, rising to 185 in 1921, levelling at 181 in 1931 but leaping to 250 in 1961 and 350 in 1971. This suggests that today between 2,000 and 3,000 British doctors have an alcohol problem and the standard mortality rate

from alcoholism amongst doctors' wives is twice the national female rate for their class.

A report on a symposium held at the Royal Society of Medicine on 26 January 1977, which included 21 selected participants (including Dr Rodney Wilkins representing the Royal College of General Practitioners), has now been produced in booklet form and this is one of the many facts contained in this thorough review.

It is increasingly recognized that regular daily consumption of as little as four to eight pints of beer daily, or just over a half bottle of sherry or just under of spirits, may be hazardous, and episodic black-outs, amnesia, or intoxications are similar warnings. The message is that the impaired physician needs early help, not late leading to eventual trial, with loss of livelihood and risk of danger to patients in the interim.

This booklet should be compulsory reading for all members of the new General Medical Council and the many family doctors who doctor doctors. It offers lay and legal advice, as well as the purely psychiatric approach, and discusses the difficult problems alcoholism brings, with all its social, ethical, family and professional repercussions. Fortunately, there are now doctors' groups of Alcoholics Anonymous which can be contacted, in confidence, either through Dr Max Glatt or through the Medical Council on Alcoholism (Tel: 01-235 4182). The Council's Medical Director, who is now retiring after 10 years in a second career, deserves our grateful thanks for all his hard work.

ROBIN STEEL

## THE CARE OF THE ELDERLY IN THE COMMUNITY

*Idris Williams*

*Croom Helm  
London (1979)*

235 pages. Price £9.95 (hardback) or £4.95 (paperback)

This textbook satisfies a long felt need for an account of the care of the elderly written by a general practitioner. It is strange that although 96 per cent of the

elderly live at home and the greater part of their care is given by general practitioners, most books about the elderly are hospital orientated. There is a widespread failure by academic bodies, including the Royal College of General Practitioners, to develop the enormous potential for the teaching of the physiology and pathology of ageing in the community. Since only 25 per cent of vocational training schemes provide hospital experience of geriatric medicine, it is inevitable that the trainee should receive most of his training in the general practice year. This textbook should provide an invaluable aid to trainers and course organizers, many of whom have received no training in the care of the elderly.

The format of the book has been carefully constructed with a coherence which can be achieved only by single authorship. The initial section outlines the foundations on which planning can be based. It describes demographic trends, the physical and social status of the elderly, and the natural history of ageing. The author then develops the theme of the problems of the elderly in the community, teasing out the threads of physical and social vulnerability. The next section deals with contemporary solutions describing the aims of the care and ways in which they can be achieved by the organization of clinics for the elderly. The chapter on available resources contains much valuable information.

Part 5, which deals with common clinical conditions, contains much sound practical advice. The chapter on mental illness in old age is particularly informative although the use of the old classification of the causes of confusion as acute delirium or chronic dementia is not as helpful as the newer concept of acute and chronic brain failure.

Development in future editions might include a description of various alarm systems, both sophisticated and simple. Alleviation of the basic fear of many old people of not being able to summon help in an emergency is an important part of care.

Dr Williams has produced an easily read textbook on community care which can be recommended unreservedly to every general practitioner and trainee.

A. E. ELLIOTT