

to hope that some attitudes do. A table of causes of menorrhagia includes: "excessive coitus, cold bath, dancing, hunting, gymnastics, bicycling". What is a poor woman to do? This might have been lifted straight from a Victorian "Young ladies' guide to healthy living". Unless the contributor is prepared to submit evidence, preferably in the form of a controlled study using double-blind and random selection techniques, I shall remain reluctant to accept this list!

In all, I do not think that this book lives up to its reputation and I doubt if it warrants a place on the shelves of most general practitioners.

ANN V. BUXTON

WHY SUFFER? PERIODS AND THEIR PROBLEMS

Lynda Birke and Katy Gardner

*Virago
London (1979)*

68 pages. Price £1.50

I wonder who the authors intend should read this handbook? It is an excellent short textbook on menstruation but even with the extensive glossary (which goes round and round in circles as glossaries tend to do) would be too complicated for most of my female patients.

Quite rightly the authors describe the biology of the menstrual cycle as complex and very reasonably allow the reader to find it difficult to understand; but it is a pity it was dealt with in the first chapter as I fear it may discourage many a reader who would benefit from the later chapters. A simple introductory chapter, with the physiology as an appendix, would have been preferable. Also the authors are not well served by their illustrations and tables. On page 15 the text reads: "The changes in vaginal secretions are described in the accompanying chart (Table 2). If you are fortunate enough to have access to a microscope" (for viewing the vaginal mucus: I felt I needed it for looking at Table 2, which was interesting in detail but minute in scale!

The booklet goes on to give a useful review of the causes of premenstrual tension, dysmenorrhoea, and irregular periods and discusses the mythology of menstruation and the attitudes to premenstrual tension and menstruation of sufferers and their families, as well as their doctors. The appropriate drugs and rationale of using them are explained well and much useful advice is given under the heading "Self-help". Though many doctors would not be sure

of the efficacy of raspberry leaf tea, at least it is harmless.

Although I agree that we should be able to "throw off the shame, guilt, and secrecy surrounding menstruation", I really cannot go as far as the authors, who are declared feminists, in their contention that this will lead us to enjoy it, nor do I consider that this is an acceptable approach for most of our patients.

I do not agree that doctors foist hysterectomy on their patients; I find patients often raise the subject themselves. I was glad to see that the D and C is not given undue emphasis: I consider it to be an overperformed operation of doubtful value (*February Journal*, p. 68).

The series of Virago Handbooks is probably not one which general practitioners would normally look at but this volume certainly merits attention from both male and female doctors, and recommendation to those patients who would be able to understand it.

JANE RICHARDS

ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY MEDICINE

*W. H. Rutherford, P. C. Nelson,
P. A. M. Weston and D. H. Wilson*

*Pitman Medical
Tunbridge Wells (1980)*

393 pages. Price £29.00

The specialty of accident and emergency medicine is comparatively new, and this comprehensive book is probably the first to cover the subject in such depth. It is interesting to note the similarities between this subject and general practice: both specialties are at present defining their aims and objectives, the nature of their training, and their areas of influence. In addition, both have organizational problems and require a broad range of skills and knowledge.

The book contains five main sections, covering organization, life-threatening emergencies, major conditions (stretcher patients), minor conditions (walking patients), and specialized topics. Since almost any condition can present at an accident and emergency department, subjects covered range from major trauma to headache, so that management of the non-urgent medical conditions described differs little from that in general practice. Many patients attending accident and emergency departments really should seek the help of their general practitioner and the authors feel that often such patients receive scant attention from junior acci-

dent and emergency doctors. Four possible solutions are suggested: patient education, patient redirection, hospitals accepting a full primary care role out of hours, and keeping a few health centres open 24 hours a day! Although the importance of communication with the general practitioner is stressed, I feel the scope and role of general practice is not always fully appreciated; for instance, it is recommended that a patient with abdominal pain either should be admitted or sent home with arrangements for further outpatient supervision and investigation.

The book is large—21.5 cm x 28 cm (8½ ins x 11 ins) with two columns per page, making it easy to read. There are a great many clear illustrations of x-rays, equipment, practical procedures, and injuries received by patients (including a photograph of a human bite of a scrotum!)

I have little doubt that this volume will become essential reading for doctors making a career in accident and emergency medicine. General practitioners who work in community hospital accident and emergency departments will find the sections on wounds, principles of dressings and soft tissue injuries particularly useful, and may feel it worthwhile purchasing a copy for the accident department.

CLIVE STUBBINGS

ALCOHOLISM—A TREATMENT MANUAL

Wayne Poley, Gary Lea and Gail Vibe

*John Wiley (1979)
Chichester*

159 pages. Price £9.25

In New York State cirrhosis of the liver has taken third place as a cause of death in the population aged 25 to 64. In France 40 per cent of the total expenditure for health services is attributable to treatment of alcohol-related diseases, and cirrhosis has now overtaken carcinoma of the lung in the mortality statistics. Thus, it never ceases to amaze me how our profession justifies its ignorance and obvious dislike of the subject of alcoholism. There is no longer any excuse: at last we have a good choice of short manuals on the subject to which I would add this useful little book from Canada.

It is written by three young psychologists who have experience in various aspects of alcoholism. It describes the problem clearly in jargon-free, precise

language. It is also well up to date in recent trends, although it does not trace the development of knowledge from the past to the present. Being psychologists, the authors possibly linger too long over some of the more esoteric psychological treatment methods.

This is not a ready-made handbook for general practitioners—such a book has not been written yet. However, the information given here can be adapted to the needs of most family doctors who wish to identify and understand the problem drinkers in their practices.

The management of alcoholics depends first of all on the ability to recognize them, and then to draw them into discussion about the impact of their drinking on their own health and that of their family. For this, basic knowledge of the facts about alcoholism is essential and reading this short book may help.

B. POLLACK

DERMATOLOGY 3rd EDITION

J. S. Pegum and Harvey Baker

*Baillière Tindall
London (1979)*

278 pages. Price £4.95

This is the third edition of a book by two dermatologists from the London Hospital Skin Department. It epitomizes a standard revision text for students in that it is concise to the point of making it rather dull.

The first 40 pages are concerned with the principles of skin biology, diagnosis, and treatment. The sections which follow on viral, bacterial, fungal, and parasitic diseases contain all the conventional information, but ringworms are particularly well explained. Drug eruptions are comprehensively covered for a book of this size, though the presentation is really an elaborate list.

A pleasing aspect is the space given in each section to the pathogenesis and pathology of each skin condition, and in future one might expect even more detail. Sections on the nails, hair, and sweat glands are tucked away at the back, a position they do not merit in view of their common presentation.

The book is peculiarly deficient in what could be called general practice dermatology; for example, the range of rashes one sees with rubella, measles, and glandular fever is not discussed and some common conditions which can be intriguing in general practice (such as squash players' heel) are not mentioned.

Although this criticism may be nit-picking it is a sign that the book is really intended for hospital dermatologists.

The style of writing is clipped with an occasional humorous comment. There are some good black and white photographs and a few colour plates, but I feel this is totally inadequate: dermatology is very much a visual subject and more photographs especially in colour would do much to enhance the value of the book.

A. P. PRESLEY

EVERYDAY PSYCHIATRY

John Ashton

*Update Books
London (1980)*

126 pages. Price £5.95

Writing textbooks about specialist subjects in general practice is very difficult and there have been few successes: either the book is written by a hospital doctor who sees only an atypical representation of his specialty or a general practitioner who does not have the necessary depth of knowledge to be able to write on a specialist subject in such a way as to appeal to his colleagues.

This book is another attempt to bridge the gap between specialist knowledge and the reality of general practice and to a certain degree has been successful.

The text is readable and many case histories are given to show practical ways in which the psychiatrically ill patient can be helped in the community. There is also constant emphasis on the range of psychiatric illness from an exaggeration of normal behaviour to major psychotic problems.

The trainee in particular will find the guidelines in this book helpful when first coping with the vast number of patients with undifferentiated problems who present to him in the surgery. Where the book is of little help is in giving practical guidance to the inexperienced general practitioner on managing time in this sort of consultation. Skill in this can probably be acquired only through practical experience.

Inevitably, some subjects are treated fairly simply and more detailed advice on management may need to be sought elsewhere. For example, many general practitioners would not treat a child of five for enuresis.

This book is therefore recommended for vocational trainees and at £5.95 is comparatively cheap, although at a cost

of being a soft back with poor quality paper.

K. J. BOLDEN

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES 3rd EDITION

Wilfrid H. Parry

*Hodder and Stoughton
London (1979)*

247 pages. Price £3.95

It seems that most medical textbooks take about six months' thought to put in a proper perspective. Fortunately, it is immediately obvious on reading this particular book that it is essential to every primary care physician. It is exceptionally primary care orientated and the clarity of explanation is beyond reproach.

After a short administrative section explaining the monitoring of infectious disease, the content is divided into airborne diseases, animal and pet transmitted diseases; it has useful chapters on foreign travel and immigrant diseases, and 20 pages of concise, highly selected information on tropical diseases. Each section deals with clinical and therapeutic aspects of individual diseases as well as bacteriology/virology, which adds immensely to its value. There is a comprehensive reference list at the end of each section.

Whooping cough is treated in a balanced and dispassionate way. My only criticism is the shortage of information on the very topical *Campylobacter* diarrhoea (which appears to be extremely common).

The presentation of the text is good, the content interesting and easy to read. It is a truly excellent volume and will probably be as popular as its previous editions.

A. P. PRESLEY

INVOLVING DOCTORS IN HEALTH EDUCATION ABOUT CANCER

D. J. Hill, M. W. Heffernan, and D. I. Rice (Eds)

*International Union against Cancer (UICC)
Geneva (1979)*

*UICC Technical Report Series
Vol. 44*

116 pages. Price 10 Swiss Francs

It came as a surprise to me to learn that there was such an organization as the