
GENERAL PRACTICE LITERATURE

NEW BOOKS

PSYCHIATRIC ILLNESS IN GENERAL PRACTICE. REVISED EDITION

Michael Shepherd, Brian Cooper,
Alexander C. Brown,
Graham Kalton and A. Clare

OUP

Oxford (1982)

238 pages. Price £15.00

It was a pleasure to meet an old friend, slimmer in appearance and more expensively dressed in a dark suit, but showing continued vitality and still producing new ideas.

This study was a milestone when first published in 1966, as it showed that general practitioners have to cope with most psychiatric disorders, and, at the same time, brought some order to attempts to show the true size of the problem. Previous work had shown a wide variation in the proportion of patients attending general practitioners who could be described as psychologically disturbed, some estimates ranging as high as 80 per cent. While it may be true that all the world, save thee and me, is a little queer, that is no scientific basis for dealing with patients who are psychiatrically disturbed. It is impressive that the perennial arguments about the size of the problem have withered away since the publication of this book, which defines what it is talking about and gives a figure of just under 15 per cent.

What is more important for general practitioners is that Shepherd and his colleagues described our role in the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders more clearly than ever before, and paid attention to the importance of the doctor's attitude to psychiatric morbidity. Some tables in the book linger in the mind after many years, such as that showing the consultation rates per 1,000 at risk for each morbidity. While the instrument originally used in establishing this rate, the Cornell Medical Index, has been superseded by other instruments (developed partly as a result of this research), the attention now paid to the difficulty of appreciating the significance of somatic symptoms in the context of psychological disturbance has

become much clearer. The concept of 'non-attenders' in general practice was raised as an important, if difficult, field of study, probably for the first time in this work. General practitioners have so many patients to see, they do not waste much time in considering why others do not attend. The implications for medical care in the concluding chapter have led to consideration of the role of the personal doctor in scientific terms more clearly than ever before.

Finally the importance of the Addendum must not be missed. Packed into 15 pages of small print it compresses descriptions of the new tools which the authors and their associates have forged as a result of the original enquiry, and which they must now set about adapting for the use of general practitioners.

MICHAEL COURTENAY
General Practitioner, London

PAEDIATRICS

N. D. Barnes and N. R. C.
Robertson

Update Books
London (1981)

130 pages. Price £14.95

A professional lifetime's habit of tearing out articles and papers from journals and storing them in a large pile labelled 'reprints' has, in my case, filled two large filing cabinets. The series of articles in *Update* over the last few years on paediatric problems by Barnes and Robertson are somewhere in that pile. How refreshing it is, therefore, to welcome those same articles expanded, partly rewritten, with more photographs than in the originals and one or two quite unfamiliar chapters which have obviously been specially written for this, the book of the film, as it were. I have a few quibbles, but these apart, I can thoroughly recommend this book to general practitioners. The authors claim common sense governed their writing—it is very obvious that uncommon sense has been used in large measures. I found the renal tract chapter and the gut chapter extremely helpful and resolve from now on to test the urine of every child with abdominal pain for the very good reasons stated. What are they? — buy the book and find out.

G. CURTIS JENKINS
General Practitioner, Middlesex

DOCTORS AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS

F. Eskin

MCB Publications
Bradford (1981)

78 pages. Price £6.95

Skill in management is not every general practitioner's cup of tea, though, like prose, we are all using it every day of the week without realizing it. When it comes to actually studying management skill, then a lot of us fight shy of even contemplating the thought. It was, therefore, with considerable interest that I looked at this book. I have an antipathy to jargon and I had to fight this antipathy at frequent intervals, though the technical language used by Dr Eskin is not as bad as some I have read.

By the end of the book, I thought my efforts had been worthwhile and I would recommend it, particularly to those who are involved in district or regional organizations of the NHS, even if it only means that we will be able to throw the technical language back at the others.

Trainees, too, would find the book very useful. It is often difficult for the novice in general practice to realize that he or she is going to have to run a business as well as deal with patients.

STUART CARNE
General Practitioner, London

ESSENTIAL ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY CARE

F. Wilson

MTP Press
Lancaster (1981)

308 pages. Price £7.95

The contributors to this volume are doctors at the Royal Lancaster Infirmary. The foreword is a tribute to the late Dr Frank Wilson, editor and contributor, by his brother, who describes his teaching gifts and varied professional experience. It is not until one has become impressed with the first few chapters directed at the nurse working in an accident and emergency department, and the realization how helpful they would be working in health centres and general practitioner hospitals, that another hunt for an explanation for this book leads at last to the back cover—'About the book: an all-embracing,