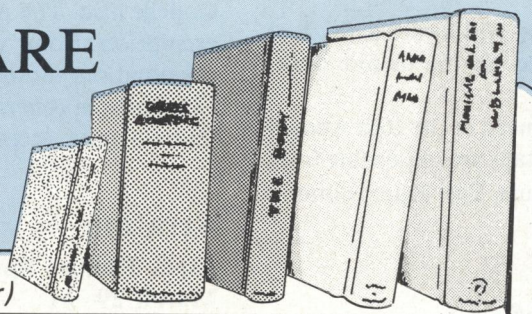


PRIMARY CARE BOOK SHELF



NIGEL STOTT (Reviews Editor)

Reviews by

R.M. RICHARDS
MARGOT RICHARDS
M.A. VARNAM
J.G.R. HOWIE
ILORA G. FINLAY
N. VASS
J. TUDOR HART

CONTINUING CARE: THE MANAGEMENT OF CHRONIC DISEASE

John Hasler and Theo Schofield (Eds)
Oxford University Press, Oxford (1984)
322 pages. Price £12.50

SCREENING FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Geoff Lindsay
Croom Helm, London (1984)
202 pages. Price £14.95

PRACTISING HEALTH FOR ALL

D. Morley, J. Rohde and G. Williams
Oxford University Press, Oxford (1983)
352 pages. Price £2.00

RESPIRATORY DISORDERS

John Fry, Roger White and Michael Whitfield
Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh (1984)
177 pages. Price £4.95

PEOPLE WITH EPILEPSY: HOW CAN THEY BE HELPED?

Mary and John Laidlaw
Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh (1984)
177 pages. Price £4.95

THE CHALLENGE OF AGEING

M.W. Shaw (Ed)
Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh (1984)
166 pages, £5.95

EPIDEMIOLOGY OF COMMON DISEASES

Hedley Peach and Richard F. Heller
William Heinemann, London (1984)
219 pages. Price £7.50

Continuing care: the management of chronic disease is a most useful book, essential reading not just for teaching practices but for every self-respecting practice. It is now widely accepted that as well as providing episodic care,

general practitioners must take on anticipatory care and the management of chronic disease. At present much of the major chronic diseases are managed by the system of dual care with important decisions taken by an ever-changing series of junior doctors. There are many reasons for the present system, not least of these is the failure of general practitioners to organize the continuing care of major chronic disease with even moderate success. Before we take our patients back, we must be able to demonstrate we have the organizational and clinical skills to provide care. This volume in the Oxford General Practice Series should help us to do so.

The first and shorter part of the book takes an overall view of the problem of chronic disease and its management in general practice. The first chapter looks at the size and nature of the problem, including the implications for medical education. The next two chapters look at the psychological and social aspects of chronic disease. Written by a psychologist and sociologist, some general practitioners may find them slightly hard going, but they are important chapters and well worth studying. The final chapter in this section looks at the implications of chronic disease for practice. It gives a clear outline of the organization of continuing care but, as it has only been allowed 10 pages, some sections are rather brief. Spécial clinics are dismissed in six lines; perhaps the arguments for and against them should have been developed in more detail.

The second and larger part of the book has separate chapters on 'the top 10' chronic disease problems. Few would quarrel with the choice of diseases, but some will be unhappy with the weighting given to different topics. In any multi-author book the balance between tight editorial control and freedom for the authors to express themselves is always difficult. Authors with a single disease have been able to go into the sort of detail needed if we are to develop the necessary expertise in handling chronic problems. The authors of the more general chapters, such as psychological problems or skin disease, have probably tried to attempt too much, and as a result have been unable to go into the detail we should expect in this book. The chapters on hypertension, asthma and epilepsy are of a high standard with just the right balance of detail required.

Each chapter has a checklist on performance review and this will be a useful framework for practices to develop their management plans for the care of chronic illness.

If this book is to continue to serve a useful function it will have to have regular revision. I hope a second edition will have tighter editorial control. The only two illustrations in the book, both in the chapter on chronic bronchitis, are unhelpful and of a very low artistic standard. There are a number of misprints, some of them important, for example on page 226 'prevention' instead of 'preservation' of function; 'affected' disorders instead of 'affective' disorders as a heading on three pages. The rest of the book is of the high standard we can expect from the editors, this group of Oxford general practitioners, and the publishers. At £12.50 it is very good value.

R.M.R.

Screening for children with special needs is well written, beautifully presented and refreshingly free from jargon. A team of professionals with considerable expertise in their disciplines set out to show how a multidisciplinary approach can be effective in helping a child to overcome the problems of handicap or disability.

Throughout the book there is recognition that participation by parents as equal partners with the professionals is central to the management of children with special needs and also to the degree of success achieved. The whole programme of surveillance, screening, assessment and management depends entirely on the accuracy of the testing procedures, and the competence and the interest of the observers. Yet the book is not didactic in its approach to the methods used and the many problems involved in lack of standardization and validation of tests in use are aired.

Further recognition is paid to the work of the Court Committee and the Warnock Committee. Both emphasized the importance of regular developmental and health surveillance in helping parents to care for their children in the context of today's difficult social and economic climate.

The importance of early recognition of the treatable congenital disorders in the first year of life is stressed. Equally, the needs of the clumsy child with coordination and behavioural problems is not ignored. Checklist of criteria aimed at preventing the sudden infant death syndrome and the non-accidental injury syndrome, which together are responsible for much of today's childhood morbidity and mortality, are provided. There is no room for complacency, as children's needs cannot be simply categorized. Considerable expertise, experience and loving care is needed, both at home and in the nursing, medical and educational fields in order to help a child achieve its full potential.

I wish I had read this book 20 years ago, it should be in every postgraduate and health centre library.

M.R.

Practising health for all sounds a bit daunting. Just for academics and those who work abroad? Not at all! This interesting and controversial book should be read by all involved in primary health care, bought by all health care teachers and stocked in every postgraduate centre library.

The authors describe ways in which several different countries have attempted to improve health care through both local and national initiatives. The message is 'Can the Alma-Ata recommendations be implemented by the year 2000?'

Under section headings of 'Political commitment', 'Peoples participation' and 'Programme development', the fascinating and important story of improvement in health, reduction in infant mortality, reduction of birth rate and improvement in nutrition is told. There is a willingness to find fault as well as praise, and to paint a true picture, warts and all.

Among many interesting points to dispel popular misconceptions were:

- the barefoot doctor concept is only likely to work where there is the political infrastructure as in China;
- Cuba's health care is heavily dependent on doctors paid for by foreign aid;
- 'In Tanzania, as in many other countries the gap between the rhetoric of "health for all" and the reality of "health for some" is glaringly obvious.'

I learned most from Mary Johnstone's account of Indonesia, entitled 'The ant and the elephant'. She describes how a small voluntary agency with charismatic leadership and highly effective local management succeeded in establishing a community programme in a town called Solo. All the usual indices of health care improved dramatically and surrounding towns copied the idea, keeping to small locally-based management. This project and its expansion needed a supportive political climate but it was based on local teams and resources, personal initiative and not government dictate.

Reading this book left me with a number of questions about the care that I provide:

- 'Do I deliver a service that identifies needs or only satisfies wants?'
- 'How can the community in which I work really be involved in its health care — on its own initiative?'
- 'How can the responsibilities for the provision of the resources we use be delegated so that they are used more appropriately?'
- 'What steps am I (and you) prepared to take to make "Health care for all" a reality in the United Kingdom?'

M.V.

Respiratory disorders is volume 8 of Churchill Livingstone's Library of General Practice. It has chairman of the editorial board John Fry along with Michael Whitfield on behalf of general practice, and Roger White on behalf of hospital medicine.

Given the large amount of respiratory illness seen in general practice, it is surprising that this should be the first book of its kind to concentrate on the field. It has many virtues: it reads easily; it is informative even if at a fairly general level; it is positive, even though it occasionally presents conclusions rather than arguments; and it presents specialist information simply, clearly and in proportion.

The authors have had three difficulties to face. The first, the blending of the styles of three contributors, they seem to have accomplished well. The second problem is the often diffuse nature of their field. Viral illness can develop bacterial elements: symptoms can become syndromes; and investigations and managements are themselves interchangeable concepts. Inevitably, repetition slips in and, equally, issues which appear important may be referred to relatively briefly but dealt with again later. The problem is not a major one, but results in the text being more for cover-to-cover reading than for reference. The third difficulty relates to deciding the detail in which to discuss controversy. In the debates on the use of antibiotics — for sore throats, middle respiratory tract infection, otitis media, prophylaxis in whooping cough — conclusions rather than arguments tend to be offered, and the same criticism applies to the discussion of the use of cough mixtures. Although this approach is understandable and defensible, it leaves the younger doctor, anxious to feel he knows the weight of arguments on both sides, unprotected against the established doctor arguing the traditional 'prescription' view on the strength of 'experience'. The problem of writing books is knowing who the readers will be. This book seems possibly to fall between the needs of established principals, who may feel most of its contents are familiar, and the needs of trainees, who may want a more conventionally academic guide. I suspect this text will stimulate others to try to improve on it; but it may be harder than they think!

J.G.R.H.

People with epilepsy is the third book in a series on the topic by the same authors and publisher. Their first book was written for those with epilepsy; their second is a definitive text for specialists, the new book is for all those whose work involves helping people with epilepsy. The authors include general practitioners, nurses, social workers, teachers, clergymen and many others in their target group. It is curious that some specialists view postgraduate needs of general practitioners as similar to non-clinically trained colleagues and this book reflects the odd mixture of ideas one would expect from such a view of reality.

The text is divided into 14 chapters with two short appendices and a glossary of medical terms for those who have no medical knowledge. The first appendix contains basic drug information and the second gives addresses of epilepsy associations in the United Kingdom. Most of the book is devoted to the general aspects of epilepsy and is written in a style and vocabulary suitable for the well-educated lay person. The first half of the book is heavily biased towards the scientific understanding of epilepsy through anatomy, physiology and pathological concepts. Most of this should be familiar to the general practitioner who will skim the pages and find in the second half of

the book a series of short accounts of epilepsy in relation to personality, psychological disturbances, drugs, employment, crime, marriage and age groups.

I would recommend the text for intelligent epileptics or their families and for others with little clinical knowledge. The authors give sensible advice on how to use the various services, when to be worried and how to get expert help.

N.C.H.S.

The challenge of ageing was written following a geriatrics conference in Australia in 1979. Thus it is not aimed at the British general practitioner but at a multidisciplinary team caring for the elderly in the community in Australia.

The problems of ageing are, however, similar throughout the western world and some chapters, such as 'Common problems of ageing', 'Behavioural disorders in the elderly people', 'Assessment' and 'The confused elderly person', are well set out, they expand basic principles and contain good ideas for the whole team.

The editor, herself a nursing adviser, has aimed to highlight the need for an informal and perceptive assessment of the elderly person, thereby to plan for appropriate action. It is not intended as a specialized text, but there is a well-classified bibliography at the end of the book. The book provides an optimistic approach with constructive suggestions for the whole team to use a common source.

The line cartoons are quite amusing, but do not always seem to augment the text. Sadly, the section on positioning the stroke patient, which has enormous scope for cartoon illustrations, contains none.

In summary, this is a good book for the multidisciplinary team caring for the elderly in the community or in a geriatric unit, especially a day hospital or day centre.

I.G.F. and N.V.

Epidemiology of common diseases is explicit and original. Remarking that previous textbooks of epidemiology aimed at undergraduates have concentrated on techniques rather than the facts unearthed by them, the authors set out to provide in a standardized and readily accessible form the principal epidemiological data relating to a large number of common and one or two rather uncommon diseases.

The idea is a good one. It can be quite difficult to find the basic data about mortality, morbidity and distribution by sex, social class, and so on, for the whole range of diseases commonly encountered by general practitioners. It is therefore a handy reference for general practitioner trainers who ought to have this material readily available for preparation of tutorials.

Unfortunately, the authors have not followed through their idea with the rigour it deserves. While one can understand that their intention was to produce a set of data sheets rather than a discussion of evidence, the total exclusion of all references, or even any critical discussion of the sources of the data they use, must be frustrating to anyone with a sufficiently enquiring mind to pick up the book in the first place. If it goes on to a second edition, these serious defects could be remedied.

J.T.H.