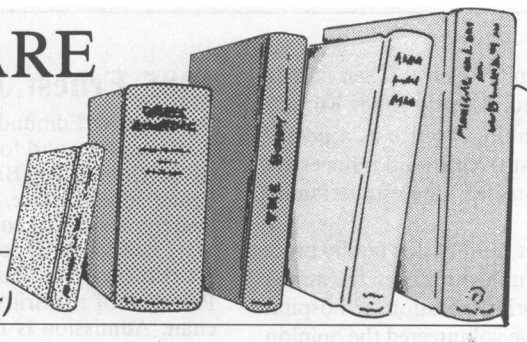


PRIMARY CARE BOOK SHELF

NIGEL STOTT (*Reviews Editor*)



PETER THOMAS
ROGER BURNE
SANDRA CLEE

MODERN DRUG USE: AN ENQUIRY ON HISTORICAL PRINCIPLES

R.D. Mann

MTP Press, Lancaster (1984)

769 pages. Price £49.00

CHRONIC CHILDHOOD DISORDERS: A HANDBOOK OF MEDICAL CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

Gwilym Hosking and Ruth Powell (Eds)

Wright, Bristol (1985)

350 pages. Price £17.50

INITIATIVE AND INERTIA: CASE STUDIES IN THE NHS

Barbara Stocking

Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust, London (1985)

236 pages. Price £8.75

SOMEONE TO TALK TO DIRECTORY 1985

Dick Thompson, Penny Webb and Matthew Pudney (Eds)

Routledge and Kegan Paul, London (1985)

682 pages. Price £20.00

CONCISE MEDICAL DICTIONARY

Second edition

Elizabeth A. Martin (Ed)

Oxford University Press, Oxford (1985)

676 pages. Price £10.95

Modern drug use: an enquiry on historical principles is a comprehensive account of Western medicine from prehistoric times to the present day. In his introduction Mann freely admits that the arrangement of his material has been strongly influenced by F.H. Garrison's classic on general medical history and that he has frequently used L.G. Morton's twice-published reference book on the same subject for his sources. Although the chronological system adopted by Mann would certainly not be approved of by some modern historians, I feel that the author's theme could not be successfully handled in any other way. Hence, the apposite subtitle: an enquiry on historical principles.

Mann's textbook stresses the genesis and evolution of drug therapy starting with the ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations followed by a fresh look at biblical medicine. He then continues with a description of the Graeco-Roman world,

the Dark and Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. The central portion of the book consists of four chapters illuminating the slow, irregular march of medicine from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.

The final section of the book is devoted not only to the progress of pharmacy, the pharmaceutical industry, and therapeutics in the present century but also to the inherent difficulties that have arisen in conjunction with their chequered progress. In our attempts to relieve and cure human suffering should we not question, along with the author, the vast amount of time and energy spent on synthesizing new drugs to the exclusion of a reappraisal of and further research into herbal compounds. The last chapter can be read profitably by all doctors who are concerned with the day-to-day administration of drugs. Within its pages lie a reminder to exercise extreme vigilance in the prescribing of newly-marketed remedies.

We seem to have turned our backs on the 'green medicine' symbolized by the author's conscious choice of an emerald green dust jacket depicting a haze of *Aspidium filix-mas* fronds. The text itself is delightfully complemented by 150 illustrations of famous personalities and healing plants, title pages of old herbals, holographs and anatomical sketches. Those pictorial rarities rivet our attention but the inclusion of popular medical illustrations gives the correct balance.

The author is a leading expert in his field and he has compiled an important book of lasting quality. It is beautifully written, erudite and informative, supported by more than 2500 references. *Modern drug use* compares favourably in every way with the books of Garrison, Guthrie, Singer, Poynter and Underwood.

P.T.

Chronic childhood disorders: a handbook of medical care in the community is a book which contains a great deal of information on a wide range of conditions which, although rare individually, are common collectively. These conditions will become increasingly important in the years to come as the possibilities for screening, prevention, prenatal diagnosis and treatment are increased by research. The editors make the point that the majority of chronically ill children live with their families in the community and it is for doctors working in the community that this book is intended.

The largest part of the book is the clinical section which includes chapters on a wide range of chronic childhood illnesses. The information is clearly presented and includes practical

advice. There is repeated emphasis on the need for early diagnosis especially of inherited conditions such as Duchenne muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis and the mucopolysaccharidoses to ensure the best opportunities for treatment and genetic counselling. The section on hypertension is useful though this confines itself to management and does not give any guidance on detection. The section on tropical illness gives welcome advice on prophylaxis for malaria in children. The final chapter, on child abuse, reminds us of this important cause of suffering in childhood and of the importance of regular and routine measurements of growth. At the end of the book there is a useful list of self-help organizations and sources of information.

Throughout the book the emotional implications of chronic childhood illness for the whole family are recognized. There is also much practical advice concerning early diagnosis, counselling, contraceptive advice, the opportunity to meet others in similar situations, access to suitable relief care and the need to listen to the questions and worries of children as well as their parents. The message that comes across is that emotional support and practical help must be provided together.

In a book which has aimed to be so comprehensive it is unfortunate that some of the common chronic conditions are hardly covered. Eczema is not mentioned at all and glue ear has only one paragraph in the chapter on deafness. Due recognition is given to the importance of teamwork yet all the authors are doctors. Valuable contributions might have come from some of the other disciplines whose contribution is often central to the care of chronically ill children.

The editors have succeeded in providing a practical book for use in the community, it will fill the gap left by more conventional paediatric texts.

R.B.

Initiative and inertia is a book which examines why innovation in health care is sometimes implemented widely without difficulty whereas on other occasions despite widespread support barriers slow down or even frustrate its implementation. The author draws heavily on the theory of 'Diffusion of innovations' reviewed by E.M. Rodgers and she uses a series of case studies within the National Health Service (NHS) to uncover the many factors which influence the process of innovation and change. An influential steering group provided background support for the project which is the latest in a series commissioned by the Nuffield Provincial Hospital Trust.

In part II of the book four innovations have been selected for analysis: regional secure units for mental illness, inpatient waking times, Asian rickets and day surgery. Understanding the process of acceptance or rejection of innovation is important for both practical and academic reasons and the general practitioner or nurse who chooses to read the book will be stimulated to examine local medical and nursing politics in a different light.

The text is an empirical study which describes a situation through the eyes of a social researcher. The steering group did not appear to have a representative from the ranks of those who have front-line contact with the public. This omission means that the power of social networks to moderate oscillating specialist ideas is sometimes portrayed as a barrier rather than

as a desirable modifier of excessive zeal. Thinking doctors, administrators and nurses should read this useful book, and health service research workers will find it valuable.

N.C.H.S.

Someone to talk to directory 1985 is a directory of self help and community support agencies in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Over 10 000 agencies throughout the British Isles have supplied information about their work and services and this has been compiled into a directory of names, addresses, telephone numbers and functions. National and local organizations are listed. Subject groupings, problem areas and alphabetic indexing assist in rapid access to information.

The concept behind the directory is that people often have the ability to help themselves if they have access to the right information about sources of help. The emphasis on mental health highlights preventive psychological care and the editors hope that general practitioners will welcome this resource for their patients who can then use more effective self help and appropriate professional help.

A substantial minority of the population will need help in finding their way around this book and therefore it should certainly be used by receptionists and nurses as a reference document because thousands of new contacts are arranged over the reception desk every day.

N.C.H.S.

Concise medical dictionary 1985 gives clear explanations of nearly 10 000 medical terms and concepts in all major specialties. Interestingly, many terms which have crept into common use in primary health care are not included, for example 'anticipatory', 'patient-centred', 'opportunistic' and 'participation', and the word 'health' is not defined or linked to some of its most important fellow phrases. The terms 'health centre', 'health education', 'health commissioner' and 'health visitor' are included but 'health promotion', 'health belief' and 'health behaviour' are examples of exclusions. Clearly the editor has not yet recognized that a new area of medical endeavour is growing up in the wider world. None of the editorial advisors have the MRCGP or its international equivalents.

The target audience is wide and it includes medical secretaries, so the book was also put to the test by asking a secretary to comment on its value from her viewpoint:

'As a medical secretary I do not think I would choose this dictionary as my main reference source because of its full explanations. When looking for the correct spelling of a word and a brief description of its meaning it is impractical to have to wade through simple words like 'doctor', 'clamp' or 'nursing officer' while at the other extreme the section on food poisoning takes up most of one page. I would have preferred this book to contain more difficult words and phrases and less description space.'

S.C.

(Medical Secretary)

Could it be that the target audiences for this dictionary are incorrectly defined?

N.C.H.S.