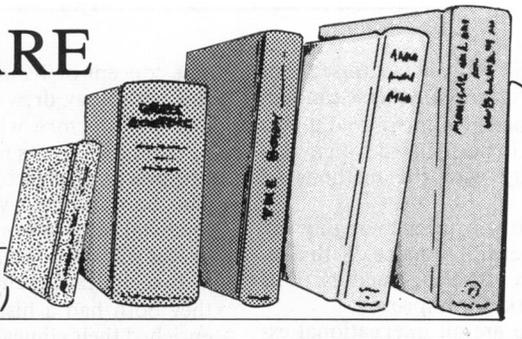


PRIMARY CARE BOOK SHELF

NIGEL STOTT (Reviews Editor)



J.S. BROWNE
MARGOT RICHARDS
HELEN HOUSTON
KAREN WALKER
P.D. CAMPION

THE POLICY OF RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND ITS RAMIFICATIONS

Calum Paton

The Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust, London

Occasional Papers 2 (1985)

74 pages. Price £4.75

CARDIAC PROBLEMS OF THE ADOLESCENT AND YOUNG ADULT

Desmond G. Julian and Nanette K. Wenger (Eds)

Butterworths, London (1985)

282 pages. Price £45.00

MONITORING FOR ADVERSE DRUG REACTIONS

S.R. Walker and A. Goldberg (Eds)

MTP Press, Lancaster (1985)

152 pages. Price £29.95

ABORTION: MEDICAL PROGRESS AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Ciba Foundation Symposium 115

Ruth Porter and Maevé O'Connor (Eds)

Pitman, London (1985)

285 pages. Price £27.95

ASTHMA. ITS MANAGEMENT IN GENERAL PRACTICE

Ian Gregg

Update Publications, London (1985)

46 pages. Price £2.00

WOUNDED HEALERS. MENTAL HEALTH WORKERS' EXPERIENCE OF DEPRESSION

Vichy Rippere and Ruth Williams (Eds)

John Wiley, Chichester (1985)

192 pages. Price £5.95

THE BLACK AND WHITE MEDICINE SHOW. HOW DOCTORS SERVE AND FAIL THEIR CUSTOMERS

Donald Gould

Hamish Hamilton, London (1985)

277 pages. Price £10.95

The policy of resource allocation and its ramifications is a concise little book which heralds a new era in general practice: the cash limiting of services. Until recently the redistribution of resources formula (Resource Allocation Working Party) was something which specialists suffered from in the more privileged areas of hospital medicine. The Family Practitioner Services were exempt — except for administrative costs — and so the upheaval in hospital services was only felt in general practice via pressure to prescribe more, expedite overdue referrals and take back some categories of patient. These were ways in which pressurized

specialists could shift costs from the secondary to the primary sectors (which had no additional help to meet the new demands).

If you can spare an hour to read this useful book you will realize that there are many civil servants and government agents who would like to impose new limits on the expenditure of the Family Practitioner Services. Primary health care presents a problem to tidy administrative thinkers and anyone who understands and cares about the future of excellence in general practice will find this essay a masterpiece of brevity and summarized concepts in this otherwise incomprehensible area.

N.C.H.S.

Cardiac problems of the adolescent and young adult is aimed at the specialist and the price tag of £45 will place it firmly out of reach of the average general practitioner. This is unfortunate as it covers a number of topics relevant to general practice which make it worth including in a practice library.

For those interested in sports medicine there is a section on athletic training, its effects on the heart and pulse rate, and the possible risks involved, including the causes of sudden death in athletes.

There is a useful review of infective endocarditis and its prophylaxis with a reminder from Dr Oakley that subacute bacterial endocarditis should be assumed whenever a patient with a heart murmur has an unexplained fever for more than one week.

On the question of oral contraceptives, Professor Oliver discusses their impact on blood pressure, lipid levels, thrombosis and coronary heart disease. He takes a pessimistic view of long term side-effects, fearing an increase in coronary heart disease among women aged 50 years or over who took oral contraceptives when they were younger.

Further interesting chapters cover the prevention and early detection of hypertension and coronary heart disease in children, the pregnant adolescent with heart disease and the prognosis for 'cured' congenital heart disease in terms of life insurance and employment.

J.S.B.

Monitoring for adverse drug reactions is the report of a workshop held in October 1983 by the Centre for Medicines Research. While a written report can never adequately evoke the atmosphere of a clinical meeting, it is a more convenient means of disseminating information and provides easily available material for reference purposes.

This small book sets out to describe and discuss the various methods presently in use for obtaining information about adverse reactions to drugs. It describes the efforts made by the drug regulatory authorities in conjunction with the pharmaceutical industry and academic and independent research bodies, to provide a quick, simple and accurate system for recording and validating the information, while maintaining patient confidentiality.

In the assessment of the benefit/risk ratios it is stressed that patients' safety is of paramount importance. No scheme can succeed without the cooperation of a practising doctor and it also depends upon careful clinical observation associated with a high index of suspicion and a familiarity with the methods of reporting.

The College has stated its commitment to encouraging the development of computerization in general practice. With adequate and accurate data available from sufficient practices, post-marketing surveillance could be markedly improved.

The contributors to this workshop are all international experts. The book is easy to read, well edited and printed, with short explicit chapters and a great deal of data provided in a simple form. All training practices and hospital libraries would benefit from having this book on their shelves.

M.R.

Women all over the world request termination of their unwanted pregnancies. The ease with which they are able to obtain a termination of their pregnancy and the method used, depend on the attitude of their government and the local provision of services. Following the Abortion Act of 1967 the number of pregnancies therapeutically terminated in Britain rose to the present stable rate of 11–12 per 1000 women aged between 15 and 44 years per year. As a result increasing numbers of people — medical and other professionals and lay workers — are involved in counselling pregnant women, in providing an abortion service and in caring for women before, during and after an abortion.

Abortion: medical progress and social implications is a collection of papers presented at the symposium of the same name held at the CIBA Foundation in 1984. The papers describe studies from many different countries on various aspects of abortion and include discussions of moral, legal and ethical considerations.

Excellent papers describe the effects of abortion on the physical, psychiatric and social wellbeing of the woman and her husband. Newer methods of termination such as menstrual induction are discussed, as are controversial issues such as gestational age and viability of the fetus. Two other important topics are also included — termination of pregnancy for congenital abnormality, and the children born to women denied abortion. However, the discussions appear to be printed verbatim and they include clinical descriptions, research work and contentious opinions, all of which could have been improved by careful editing.

Overall this is a book which I enjoyed reading, and will read again despite disagreeing with some of the opinions expressed. I can recommend it to all those whose work includes the care of women who request a termination of pregnancy.

H.H.

Asthma. Its management in general practice is an easily read booklet which covers most aspects of general practitioner's management of asthma.

Ian Gregg deals with the problems of the definition and diagnosis of asthma and the effects these have on future management. Various drugs and methods of administration are discussed and the use of corticosteroids — both inhaled and taken orally — is favoured. The emphasis placed on steroids in this book is in contrast with previous publications on this topic.

Patient education and the prevention of acute attacks are stressed and the role of the nurse is mentioned on several occasions in this context. There is a section on the management of acute attacks and the controversial subject of home nebulizers could have been expanded upon in this section.

This booklet has a good reference section for general practitioners and it also recommends several publications for the information of patients.

K.W.

The concept of *Wounded healers* is not new. The compilers of this anthology drew this concept from Glin Bennet's *Patients and their doctors*, which traced it back to Asclepius. The compilers argue that its relevance to contemporary medicine is that 'the practitioner recognize the possibility that he is vulnerable'. This book is about vulnerability, and it describes how 19 professional healers working in the field of mental health coped, or did not cope, with depression.

Two clinical psychologists working together discovered that they both had a history of depression which seemed to have enriched their clinical work. Feeling that others might have had similar experiences, they invited, through professional journals, contributions describing the nature of such an experience, its circumstances, the author's and others' response to it, and what had been learnt from the experience.

The resulting book, described as a 'phenomenological data base', documents, in autobiographical form, a wide variety of experiences, while attempting to describe how depression may be used constructively. However the editors acknowledge that some depression can lead to despair, personal disaster, or even death.

The contributions range from a brief reminiscence by a retired general practitioner of an episode of depression suffered in 1919, to sophisticated accounts from doctors, nurses, social workers, and clinical psychologists. The final chilling chapter ends:

'My strongest wish is that if the present depression deepens, then it will progress too rapidly to allow anyone to detain me compulsorily before I have time to reach the point at which suicide becomes mandatory.'

This author took her own life shortly after writing these words.

The spontaneity and frankness of most of the contributions, together with the scholarly yet sympathetic editorial analyses between the sections, makes this a readable book, and an important addition to the literature of professional health and the natural history of depressive illness.

P.D.C.

Like the charlatans and cranks whom he berates, Dr Gould has perpetrated something of a confidence trick on his readers in describing his book, *The black and white medicine show*, as a survey. A scrap book of press-cuttings is probably a more accurate description of this pot-pourri of anecdotes, held together by opinions.

Nevertheless, in a critical commentary on many of the shibboleths of modern medicine, Dr Gould exposes his lay readership to uncomfortable issues, which merit informed debate beyond the medical profession. The lack of references greatly reduces any contribution this book might have made to such a debate.

Each reader will be delighted to find his own particular *bête noire* the victim of Dr Gould's invective, but will feel indignation at an unjustified assault on an institution or practice with which he is associated. Thus I was unhappy about the critical generalizations of general practitioners and their 'dragons', and the specific criticism of inner city general practitioners based on the author's experience of working as a part-time deputy in east London 'a long time ago'.

The chapter on ethics, entitled 'Doctors in the role of god', seems to argue that individuals should be able to do whatever they like (to the extent of producing over-the-counter suicide pills), but it does admit that most people prefer to invest the medical profession with the responsibility of life or death decisions. However, this is not a textbook of medical ethics, a historical record of the profession, or a social survey. It is a medical journalist's armchair reminiscences of a lifetime's doctor watching, and as such it could be said to both entertain and inform.

P.D.C.