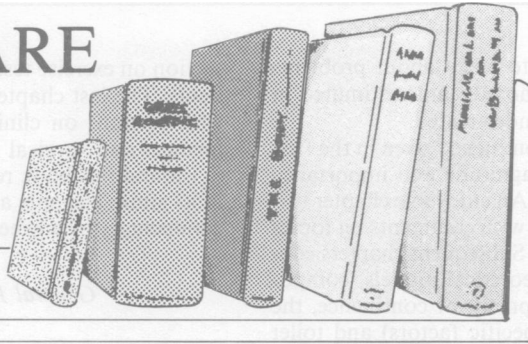


# PRIMARY CARE BOOK SHELF



## ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

**A practical guide to its management and nature (2nd edition)**

*Keith Hawton and Jose Catalan*

*Oxford University Press (1987)*

*211 pages. Price £12.50*

In the 1960s and first half of the 1970s the increase in the incidence of deliberate self-poisoning and self-injury was dramatic and although the peak has passed, the problem remains large and difficult for both hospital and primary care teams involved in immediate and long term management. It is reassuring, therefore, to find a small practical volume which addresses the complexities of attempted suicide with assurance and enthusiasm.

The authors explain the imperfect terminology in the field. The text describes patterns of self-harm and the psychosocial factors; detailed assessment; various 'therapies' with histories; organization of care; and prevention. I would have liked to have seen more on alcohol and socioeconomic difficulties but accept that any change of emphasis would upset a balance which is fine in both senses.

The writing is clear, concise and attractively free of jargon. It seems the authors are in tune with their subject and are optimistic enough to suggest primary and secondary prevention. The book is well researched and referenced and has enough depth and breadth to serve the dual purpose that small volumes attempt but seldom achieve.

Attempted suicide frequently arouses emotional bias and tries the patience and it is a credit to the authors' experience and empathy that such a well balanced practical guide has been produced. This second edition of *Attempted suicide* is an essential book for the enlightened training practice.

J. PARK

*General Practitioner, Bo'ness, West Lothian*

## BEHAVIORAL COUNSELING IN MEDICINE

**Strategies for modifying at-risk behavior**

*Michael L. Russell*

*Oxford University Press (1986)*

*327 pages. Price £25.00*

Detecting our patients' unhealthy life styles is easy, but helping to modify them can be extremely difficult. This American text addresses this problem and it is described as an essential resource for clinicians in behavioural medicine, health psychologists, behavioural therapists, family practitioners and physician's assistants.

The first half of the book aims to provide a basic understanding of the counselling process. The remaining chapters present staged applications of behavioural counselling for specific health related behavioural problems: diet, weight control, physical inactivity, smoking, stress and non-compliance with medication. The book does not seek to minimize the scale of the problems

involved and gives an insight into the resources that can be devoted to solving them. However, it is lengthy and very prescriptive, both in its approach to patients and clinicians. It contains few references.

This book would be a helpful resource to a teacher planning a course for doctors and nurses or to others involved in health education; but the approaches described would require major adaptation before being of value in everyday practice.

T.P.C. SCHOFIELD

*General Practitioner, Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire*

## AN OUTLINE OF PSYCHOTHERAPY FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS AND PRACTITIONERS

*Harold Maxwell (Ed)*

*Wright, Bristol (1986)*

*107 pages. Price £6.25*

In this small, quickly read and easily digested volume, Harold Maxwell and seven colleagues give outlines of several forms of psychotherapy as applied to individuals, families and groups in various settings. Each chapter has its own reading list and some give additional information on professional groups and training courses.

Some of the chapters are excellent, including those by David Alexander on psychodynamic therapy, Andrew Elder on psychotherapy in general practice, Alan Cooklin on family therapy and Dick Blackwell on group therapy. There are other chapters on medical students' feelings, liaison psychiatry and behaviour therapy but these are less well written and not as useful or informative as one might have expected.

Overall the book has a psychodynamic feel to it. No mention was made of client-centred psychotherapy, among the best researched of all 'talk' therapies; and cognitive therapy, so useful for anxieties or depression, was given just three paragraphs. Both are major developments in psychotherapy and deserved chapters to themselves.

These points aside, I liked the book and commend it to medical students and practitioners and to others who want an introduction to psychotherapy before pursuing the field in more depth.

PETER HOLDEN

*Principal Clinical Psychologist, St Clement's Hospital, Ipswich*

## CONTINENCE AND INCONTINENCE

**Psychological approaches to development and treatment**

*Paul S. Smith and Linda J. Smith*

*Croom Helm, London (1987)*

*280 pages. Price £22.50*

A book with this title is not likely to be in the general practitioner's top 20 reading list. This is a pity, for this small and ex-