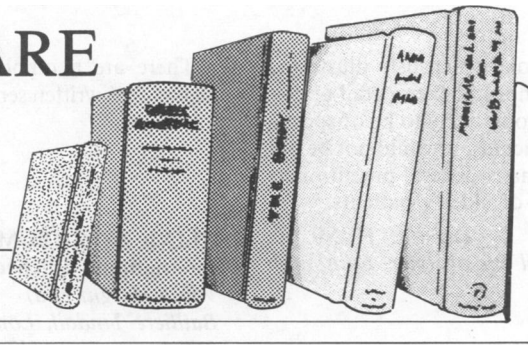


PRIMARY CARE BOOK SHELF



A GREAT AND GROWING EVIL
The medical consequences of alcohol abuse
The Royal College of Physicians
Tavistock, London (1987)
125 pages. Price £6.95

This well-referenced report is probably aimed at medical and paramedical workers but could be useful to anyone who requires a readable and accurate account of the physical consequences of alcohol abuse. However, this is not the report to consult about the recognition or management of alcohol problems in general practice. Only a brief account of the management of the alcohol problem itself is given and there is no information about the treatment of the associated physical disorders.

There is a good chapter on occupation and the importance of comprehensive work policies banning alcohol. However, in the chapter on medical responsibilities there is no mention of the comprehensive work policy being applied to hospitals and medical schools where at present alcohol is often freely available. Surely doctors should abstain from alcohol before consulting and operating?

This report is to be welcomed because it complements those of our own College and the Royal College of Psychiatrists and emphasizes the common themes of prevention, the importance of the national consumption being lowered, the Blennerhassett recommendations, sensible drinking limits, the importance of early detection and hence the importance of taking drinking histories routinely, the need for funding for research and lastly the importance of the primary care team. General practitioners and trainees will use this report to update their knowledge of the strictly medical aspects of alcohol abuse.

PETER TOMSON
General Practitioner, Abbots Langley, Hertfordshire

PRIMARY CARE OF THE ELDERLY: A PRACTICAL APPROACH

J. Williamson, R.G. Smith and L.E. Burley
Wright, Bristol (1987)
193 pages. Price £14.95

A book on primary care of the elderly by these authors is very welcome. Although not primary care physicians themselves, they have contributed extensively to such care, and I looked forward to reading the book. However, by the end, I felt that it had not quite come up to expectations and I wondered why.

The first reason is that it is too much oriented towards geriatric medicine. This is an old problem when writing a book concerned with the community care of old people; it is very hard not to retain the pathological model. Similarly, I was concerned about the illustrative cases, most of which describe situations where a geriatrician had been consulted and the patient subsequently admitted to hospital. Surely it is in situations where the geriatrician is not called in, and the general practitioner has to confront the problem himself, that guidance is needed?

I was sorry that there was no mention of anticipatory care, which provides the general practitioner with a practical and sen-

sible approach not only to preventive activities but also health educational initiatives for his patients. Perhaps a section on the inter-relationship between health and social problems might have been helpful with emphasis on the close linkages between activities of daily living and health problems.

E. IDRIS WILLIAMS
Head of Department of General Practice,
University of Nottingham

STROKE

A self-help manual for stroke sufferers and their relatives
R.M. Youngson
David and Charles, London (1987)
143 pages. Price £5.95

As this attractively presented book is designed to help people who have been affected by strokes, I gave it to a patient who suffered a stroke two years ago. He found the book gave him valuable insights into his past problems and those which he continues to face, especially the psychological adjustment to his disability. For example it was helpful for him to know that feelings of depression and rapid mood swings are common in people who have had strokes.

He is a well-educated man but nevertheless found the medical terminology in the book difficult to digest and sometimes confusing. Sketches of the body would have been useful for indicating the particular parts referred to in the text. In spite of this criticism, this is an excellent book which can be recommended to patients who have suffered strokes and who would like to know more about their condition and how to rehabilitate themselves. It can also be recommended to the growing number of volunteers who seek to help stroke patients through agencies such as the Chest, Heart and Stroke Association.

E. GRAHAM BUCKLEY
Editor of the Journal

SKIN DISEASE IN OLD AGE

Ronald Marks
Martin Dunitz Ltd, London (1987)
276 pages. Price £30.00

The numbers of very old people in the population are slowly increasing and more and more of our medical resources are being directed towards them. The process of growing old affects people in different ways and it is only relatively recently that dermatologists have become more interested in the study of ageing skin. *Skin disease in old age* comes from the prolific pen of Professor Marks. The first two chapters set the scene, one describing the structure and function of the aged skin, and the other the effects of environmental hazards. The damaging effects of the ultraviolet part of the sun's rays are described and this is backed by histological evidence showing degenerative changes in the dermis after such exposure. The ways in which elderly people are affected by both the common and the rarer skin diseases are described and the differences in management dealt with in detail.

This is a beautifully produced book, generously illustrated by excellent photographs which have not lost their detail or colour in reproduction. While this is a book likely to be of special interest to dermatologists and geriatricians, it would not be out of place on the bookshelves of the many general practitioners who look after substantial numbers of elderly patients.

DUNCAN H. MCVIE
General Practitioner, Edinburgh

DEALING WITH DRUGS

Helping the problem drug taker

Annas Dixon

BBC Books, London (1987)

208 pages. Price £7.95

The breadth of experience of this author must make her one of the best placed people for writing a book about drugs and drug users. Her considerable exposure to various facets of the problem and, judging by the acknowledgements, to most of the best known professionals in the field make her a mature and perceptive commentator. The aims presented in the introduction — to 'help social workers and other professionals to plan effective work with problem drug takers' and to 'offer insights to the families and friends of drug takers' — are adequately achieved. With a refreshing confidence arising from first-hand experience the possibilities are explored and realistic guidelines suggested. The text is easy to read and gratifyingly free from the lapses into street jargon, common in books about drugs, which date books so rapidly.

The short chapters are easy to assimilate and the few useful case summaries are well selected and varied enough to demonstrate the diversity of possible responses to any situation. Owing perhaps to the author's social work experience, the concentration on support and non-professional agency work makes the book particularly useful for medical students and doctors who tend to have tunnel vision when it comes to problems with no tangible treatment or obvious potential for cure. The pieces on assessing the problem and achieving longer-term goals are particularly relevant to those of us who tend to give up on drug takers when they relapse back into drug use.

The author may have made a definite decision to avoid the medical complications of drug abuse in the main part of the book but the problem of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) is not mentioned until page 150 and only included in passing in an appendix. Although AIDS may indeed be a passing symptom of drug abuse it will undoubtedly change the number of deaths in drug users over the next decade and have a considerable impact on the management of the problem.

J. ROY ROBERTSON
General Practitioner, Edinburgh

AIDS

The acquired immune deficiency syndrome (2nd edition)

Victor G. Daniels

MTP Press, Lancaster (1987)

188 pages. Price £11.95

This is the second edition of a book which was first published only 18 months ago. The rate of progress in the epidemic of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and in the knowledge about the infection are such that a third edition will need to be published soon. Despite this rapid expansion of knowledge, basic information about the virus and its early epidemiology are essential for doctors. This simple, straightforward account gives doctors a basic knowledge of the subject to enable them to better understand new information and ideas about AIDS and HIV.

There are a number of books now about AIDS. Doctor Daniels has written sensibly and lucidly on a complicated subject.

E. GRAHAM BUCKLEY
Editor of the Journal

CLINICAL RHEUMATOLOGY

International practice and research, April 1987: pain

Verna Wright (Ed)

Bailliere Tindall, London (1987)

214 pages. Price £17.50

In the first book in a series, Professor Wright has drawn together a dozen writers to produce a comprehensive review of the subject of pain in rheumatology patients. Following traditional medical teaching he begins with the anatomy and physiology of the pain pathways and in subsequent chapters deals with the biochemical background of the perception of pain. To the average general practitioner this is heavy going but serves as a real update on the exciting research that has taken place in this field in the last 10 years.

I feel that the most helpful chapter is on the drug treatment of chronic pain. We all see ourselves as experts in this field and yet here we are offered clear guidelines on the best use of the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and the latest ideas on using the second line antirheumatic drugs. Steroids, except by the intra-articular route, are now relegated to the third division.

The methods and organization of a pain clinic are well described in the next chapter, providing a fascinating insight into the available techniques. I also enjoyed the chapters on the surgical and psychiatric management of pain. For the general practitioner with an interest in rheumatology this book is to be recommended.

MARTIN BARKER
General Practitioner, Stamford, Lincolnshire

A HANDBOOK FOR MEDICAL TEACHERS (2nd edition)

David Newble and Robert Cannon

MTP Press, Lancaster (1987)

157 pages. Price £12.95

This delightful book fulfils its purpose admirably. Written in a clear and easy style with humorous illustrations it offers practical help and advice to the medical teacher, backed by full explanations of educational principles, using a minimum of jargon. The chapter headings, the use of bold print and the general layout enable topics to be read up easily and quickly with a guide to further reading on each subject.

A range of teaching techniques from formal lecture to buzz groups are mentioned, along with course planning, assessment, use of teaching aids, and even a chapter on preparing and reading a scientific paper. Here the teacher can find ideas and support when he feels lost and incapable. However, there is much more to this book — the need to define carefully and clearly the educational task and how best to achieve it, always keeping the needs of the student in mind, is an underlying theme demonstrated well in the book itself.

The particular skills and problems of postgraduate vocational and continuing education, and one to one teaching, are not mentioned (could they be chapters in future editions?) but undoubtedly trainers, course organizers, general practitioners and clinical tutors, and indeed anyone concerned with education would find this book refreshingly helpful and stimulating.

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