

DRUG MISUSE**A practical handbook for GPs***A. Banks and T.A.N. Waller**Blackwell Scientific, London (1988)*

343 pages. Price £12.95

At a time when human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection and the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) have heightened the awareness of many general practitioners to the issues of the management of drug misuse, this book is most welcome. Drs Banks and Waller show themselves to be knowledgeable and dedicated to the problems of drug misuse. They believe that 'it is essential that GPs now become much more involved in the treatment of drug misuse before the AIDS epidemic worsens' and their case for this involvement is persuasive. As general practitioners they are well aware of the problems we face in the management of drug abuse, and their intimate knowledge of these problems in a general practice setting is clear.

I was most impressed with the up-to-date factual information about HIV infection and AIDS — other books have become out of date even before they were published. Clear and concise tables of information allow for quick and easy reference but even with this detail it remains very much a book for the general practitioner.

Drug misuse is not solely about opiate dependence, HIV and AIDS. The sections on benzodiazepines, barbiturates and volatile substances are excellent, and these are all areas in which general practitioners are becoming increasingly vulnerable. As someone who is already working in the field of drug misuse, I still found a great deal of useful up-to-date information. In an area of so many clinical, ethical and moral difficulties this book has given me renewed vigour.

CARI B. BICKLER

*General Practitioner, Edinburgh***LIPIDS AND HEART DISEASE: A PRACTICAL APPROACH***Madeleine Ball and Jim Mann**Oxford University Press, 1988*

174 pages. Price £9.95

This book is superb. A clinical biochemist, human nutritionist and a group of general practitioners have combined their expertise to produce a 174 page well-illustrated concise guide to lipids and heart disease. The reader is gently carried on a journey from the biochemistry of lipids to the clinical problems of hyperlipidaemia and then onto the epidemiology of coronary heart disease. From here one moves to general practice screening and then a practical approach to patient management. The book concludes with an excellent practical help section which includes low fat recipes. The inventor of the Caribbean yoghurt breakfast made with a cholestyramine sachet deserves special praise. There are useful references, a glossary, index and a question and answer section.

Medical attitudes to the lipid and heart disease problem tend to fall into one of three categories: 'lipophilic', 'lipophobic' or 'liposceptic'. This book has succeeded in converting me from 'liposceptic' to 'lipophilic'. It may do the same for you. Buy this book.

RON NEVILLE

*Lecturer in General Practice,
University of Dundee***A PLACE LIKE HOME****A radical experiment in health care***Gillian Wilce**Bedford Square Press, London (1988)*

132 pages. Price £5.50

At first glance I was prepared to discount this book, a subjective account of the Lambeth community care centre, written by a journalist. My antagonism was fed by jargon such as 'radical', 'patient's autonomy', 'nurse-advocate', 'abjuration of patronage' and 'passionately committed to the concept'. My reservations were ill-founded, however. Here is a detailed and sensitive description of a unique way of caring for patients whose needs are too great for home care but too simple for hospital.

The Lambeth centre is not merely in the community, it has been adopted by the community. Staff have given back to patients the responsibility to decide about their own needs. They are permitted to do what feels right for them, even when the professionals neither understand nor agree. The staff have consequently been forced to change their professional roles. The book provides many quotes from patients, staff and others, indicating that the staff have been successful in this.

Clearly, anyone who is involved in developing community services will want to read this book. But it encompasses such important lessons on a patient-centred approach that it must be read by all who provide services for patients — this includes every general practitioner.

PHILIP L. HEYWOOD

*General Practitioner, Leeds***FITNESS FOR WORK — THE MEDICAL ASPECTS***F.C. Edwards, R.I. McCallum and P.J. Taylor (eds)**Oxford University Press (1988)*

485 pages. Price £45.00 (h/b), £17.50 (p/h)

This is a comprehensive review of the often difficult task of assessing fitness for work. It has been produced jointly by the Faculty of Occupational Medicine, the Royal College of Physicians, and the Health and Safety Executive's medical division.

The general introductory chapters covering services for disabled people and administrative and legal aspects are excellent and easy to read. However, I would have liked more discussion on important ethical problems which can arise, such as those involving confidentiality. The main chapters on the clinical specialties have each been written by two doctors, a clinician and an occupational physician. There are also chapters specifically devoted to conditions which may give rise to disproportionate anxiety about suitability for work, such as the acquired immune deficiency syndrome, back pain, diabetes and epilepsy. Each clinical area has been dealt with thoroughly with discussion of those aspects which affect work capacity, suitability for recruitment and whether an employee is fit to return to his former work.

Many firms, particularly small ones, have no occupational health service or medical advice of their own. Therefore medical guidance on fitness to work will continue to come from the family doctor or hospital specialist. I think all general practitioners and particularly doctors who conduct pre-employment medicals or give advice to employers about fitness to return to work after illness will find this book helpful.

PHILIP RUTLEDGE

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