



LEARNING GENERAL PRACTICE

A structured approach for trainee GPs and trainers

John Andars and Rebecca Baron

Pastest Service, Hemel Hempstead (1988)

116 pages. Price £9.50

Learning general practice presents a systematic programme for both trainee and trainer during the general practice year. At the start of the book the contents provide a useful checklist of the year and there is a good introduction which covers the book's intentions. The core of the book consists of 51 tutorials, each starting with a list of learning objectives, that is the work to be covered in the tutorial. The trainee is then posed up to half a dozen questions relating to the topic, much in the style of 'prompt cards'. The tutorial finishes with some suggestions for further reading. This book also incorporates 60 multiple choice questions and answers.

This highly structured approach to the year will be helpful to many trainers when planning their teaching programme and I am sure this book will be a useful addition to the practice library. It will certainly help to ensure that all major topics are covered during the trainee year.

WILLIAM REITH

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GENERAL PRACTICE AND PRIMARY HEALTH CARE 1940s-1980s

John Fry

Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust, London (1988)

116 pages. Price £8.00

The history of general practice in the years since the inception of the National Health Service makes fascinating reading both to the new entrant to the profession who may not appreciate what has gone before and to those older general practitioners who may have forgotten how restricted were the conditions in which they were once forced to work. General practice has indeed changed in almost every respect and John Fry, in his excellent and readable monograph, has detailed and explained these changes, showing the logical development of the discipline and hinting at yet further progress and expansion. The book naturally reflects much of the author's own practice style and content, and as such seems to be less representative of areas distant from the prosperous south east of England. One further but minor criticism is the almost constant euphoric view expressed of general practice, its education, vocational training, academia and college. Little is said of the problems that are still evident, far less of the steps to be taken to correct them. Apart from what I see as a rather cloistered viewpoint, the monograph makes excellent reading and could, with advantage, be expanded. The full history of general practice has still to be written, although John Fry has made a promising start.

J.H. BARBER

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EPIDEMIOLOGY IN GENERAL PRACTICE

D. Morrell (ed)

Oxford University Press (1988)

155 pages. Price £15.00

This slim multi-author volume is based on a series of questions likely to arise in the mind of a new principal in general practice: 'What is happening to me?' 'What are my patients' needs?' 'What is optimal care?' In this way David Morrell and his colleagues demonstrate the relevance of epidemiological concepts and methods to everyday practice.

The result is a valuable introduction to epidemiology, which the editor acknowledges 'is not perhaps a word which warms the heart of the average general practitioner'. Valuable because it poses the right questions, provides some useful answers and, as important, is generous with references to further reading.

If, like the book's mythical Dr Preston, you are currently beset by such questions as 'Would it be better if I moved?' then the book is to be strongly recommended. I predict that it will become required reading for trainees. For those, like myself, who have difficulty remembering the distinction between sensitivity and specificity the mnemonic provided by Martin Roland is just one of many gems in this book.

IAN STANLEY

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CORONARY HEART DISEASE: RISKS AND REASONS

A.G. Shaper

Current Medical Literature, London (1988)

70 pages. Price £7.95

This slim paperback succinctly reviews the evidence for the influence of various risk factors in coronary heart disease. After a useful summary of the pathogenesis of coronary heart disease and an examination of the risk factors which may contribute to the disease, Professor Shaper debates the predictive role of these factors and the use of risk scoring in identifying those at high risk, ending with various suggestions for approaches to the prevention of coronary heart disease. Throughout the book there are reviews of major studies in the field as well as references backing statements which provide a useful background to the current thinking.

Professor Shaper argues the case for an essentially nutritional basis to coronary heart disease which is then influenced by other risk factors. He admits himself that he presents a personal view of the role of serum cholesterol and does perhaps oversimplify the case. However, this contentious issue is tackled boldly without apology.

This book provides an overview of this modern killer disease which, as Professor Shaper argues, must be tackled in the primary care setting. It is an essential update for those involved in the prevention of coronary heart disease.

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