

medical officer at a major incident is well described. The importance of triage in classifying casualties is well covered.

Although the book is not directed towards the daily functions of general practice, there are some circumstances in which general practitioners will find its contents useful. Practitioners who, by virtue of geographical isolation, become involved in more advanced resuscitation, or those who develop an interest in major trauma management will find the book of interest. There are other sections which are of more general relevance such as the treatment of 'once in a life-time' occurrences like tension pneumothorax or cardiac tamponade.

Other topics which I found of interest were guidelines for the referral of head injuries for a neurosurgical opinion, and the reminder that minor injuries may conceal underlying serious pathology. *ABC of major trauma* deals with all injuries in a methodical manner and the description of a scoring system for the assessment of injuries may have wider application to general practice.

BRUCE LERVY

General practitioner, Swansea and West Glamorgan
branch medical officer, British Red Cross Society

GP REFERRALS TO HOSPITAL

A guide for family health services authorities

A Coulter, M Roland and D Wilkin

Centre for Primary Care Research, University of Manchester (1991)

51 pages. Price £2.00

Some referral decisions make themselves — a patient has a hernia or needs a hearing aid. Others can be a source of angst for the embattled, cost conscious general practitioner. From individual cases with their many facets the practice referral statistics are compiled ready for the annual report.

The family health services authority receives the practice statistics and in turn compiles averages and ranges for the whole authority. What are they to make of the results? Is a practice's low referral rate to ear, nose and throat departments a chance event or is there a potential problem? Can any conclusions be drawn from a high referral rate for palliative care? And how should the information be fed back to practices?

We all know there are no facile answers to these questions, but some sensible rules have been formulated in *GP referrals to hospital*. Every family health services authority will find the guidelines in this small booklet indispensable, especially in their emphasis on a careful non-judgemental approach. Many practices will also find the initial section on preparing referral data for practice reports invaluable.

MIKE PRINGLE

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Nottingham

BREAST CANCER

Lesley Fallowfield with Andrew Clark

Routledge, London (1991)

135 pages. Price £20.00

Over the last few years there have been many volumes published on cancer and terminal illness and it is refreshing to read one that makes a concerted effort to be balanced in its outlook and to avoid the all too common trap of inappropriate sentimentality. *Breast cancer* is a relatively small volume, clearly printed on non-reflective paper. However, its brevity is deceptive. The text is concentrated, with many references and thought-provoking statements. Of particular value are the sections gently exploring accepted dogma: reminding the reader that distress to partner and family is all too often underestimated; re-examining the causes of anxiety in patients with breast cancer; looking at the effect of the phenomenon of recurrence; and finally dealing with the role of the counsellor.

The description of a patient's perception of radiotherapy and chemotherapy are essential reading for any practitioner. The potential for professional counselling input at all stages of the process from diagnosis, through treatment to death is usefully explored. However, I would have liked to have seen the need for professionally trained counsellors, properly supervised and supported, even more firmly emphasized.

This book provides thought-provoking reading for the health care professional, and a plethora of references to help those who wish to gain a deeper insight into the field.

ROBIN PUGSLEY

General practitioner, Grantham, Lincolnshire

College Publications RECENT TITLES

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A nationwide survey of seven higher professional education courses which compares methods of organization, content and means of evaluation. Useful for those running similar courses in future. £6.50

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The report of a study of the working relationships between general practitioners, district nurses and health visitors, which makes a number of proposals for improving teamwork. £6.50

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The diary of a young general practitioner in training for general practice during his practice year. Describes problems and experiences that are relevant for all trainees. £9.95

The above can be obtained from the Sales Office, Royal College of General Practitioners, 14 Prince's Gate, London SW7 1PU. (Enquiries, Tel: 071-823 9698). Prices include postage. Payment should be made with order. Cheques should be made payable to RCGP Enterprises Ltd. Access and Visa welcome (Tel: 071-225 3048, 24 hours).

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