



CONTINENCE PROMOTION IN GENERAL PRACTICE **Practical guides for general practice 13**

Nigel Smith and Maggie Clamp
Oxford University Press (1991)
 64 pages. Price £6.50

Incontinence is a common, treatable condition. However, it causes much undisclosed morbidity, distress and inconvenience in the population. Continence promotion should be offered in primary care as an integral part of practice activity rather than through the specialist centres of secondary care.

Continence promotion in general practice is a useful introduction to the diagnosis and management of urinary incontinence in general practice. It is concise, easy to read and easily understood. It contains sufficient detail to guide the general practitioner and practice nurse through identification of the condition, assessment of the patient and appropriate management.

The book has chapters describing an approach to the patient which will encourage symptom disclosure, the identification of the underlying disorder, the treatment of bladder instability, the treatment of stress incontinence and the management of urinary retention. There are also sections relating to catheter management, faecal incontinence and containing symptoms.

A short book cannot cover the whole field and greater emphasis should have been placed on the primacy of history taking, usually the key to diagnosis, which can then be confirmed by examination. Although alluded to, the book could have defined more clearly those patients who would benefit from urodynamic assessment.

Although the majority of patients can be treated in primary care some patients will require referral. A common problem facing general practitioners is when and where to refer. Unfortunately, this problem is inadequately addressed in this book.

Nevertheless, *Continence promotion in general practice* represents a worthwhile purchase for any practice considering the provision of continence care.

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HAZARDOUS WASTE AND HUMAN HEALTH **A report from the BMA Professional and Scientific Division**

David Morgan (ed)
Oxford University Press (1991)
 242 pages. Price £6.99

This book provides for both general and professional readers, a much needed overview of evidence for the hazards posed to health by exposure to hazardous waste. It is clearly written, well referenced, informative and includes a good glossary of terms used. Definitions of hazardous waste, and a list of responsible authorities for waste disposal and regulation in England and Wales are appended.

Chapter one presents the emergence of hazardous waste as an environmental and public health problem, looks at it in the context of other environmental issues, and discusses concepts of risk. Chapter two examines the origins of hazardous waste, treatment and disposal methods in the UK, and the economic and social aspects of its import and export. Chapter three discusses ways of measuring adverse health effects, methodological problems and how hazardous substances may have an impact on the biological systems of exposed persons. Chapter four examines the main evidence for effects on human health and chapter five reviews the UK legislation and monitoring procedures. Chapter six summarizes the action that can be taken to manage the risks posed by hazardous waste.

The book concludes that although present information is incomplete, the risks to human health from hazardous waste, managed according to recommended standards, are probably small. However, the final section on future directions and recommendations rightly notes the need to develop ways of minimizing the waste produced and reclaiming wastes for further use, outlines current research initiatives, indicates ways of ensuring that the public are better informed about the issues, and suggests steps that can be taken by the medical profession. General practitioners who suspect a problem arising from environmental factors are encouraged to undertake studies of the population in question. Guidance and further reading are given to help plan research.

I would recommend this book to a wide audience, and agree with the back cover that 'it is essential reading for all those concerned to create a cleaner, safer society'.

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POST-VIRAL FATIGUE SYNDROME

Rachel Jenkins and James Mowbray (eds)
John Wiley, Chichester (1991)
 463 pages. Price £60.00

It is a difficult task to produce an up-to-date book on a subject over which there is so much disagreement, and about which there is so much continuing debate and research. This book comprises 29 chapters, each of which has a specialist interest, accompanied by a wealth of broad-based international references. It is not surprising, given the breadth of experience of the writers and the difficulties of the diagnosis and management of the illness, that within the book there are many differences of opinion.

The first part of the book traces the history, epidemiology and aetiology of the syndrome while the second part is a much more detailed view of the host response, including muscle and neurophysiological changes. The second part also includes an interesting chapter describing how a previously unrecognized illness developed in Akureyri, a town in Iceland. When the