



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.

JACQUELINE V JOLLEYS

Lecturer in general practice, University of Nottingham

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'.

ROBIN PHILIPP

Director, WHO Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health Promotion and Ecology, University of Bristol

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

poliomyelitis epidemic struck Iceland some years later the town of Akureyri was spared the effects of the epidemic.

In the third part of the book clinical assessment, diagnosis and approaches to management are covered with contributions from the specialities of general practice, cardiology, neurology, psychiatry, infectious diseases and paediatrics. This part also includes sections on employment and the effects of the disease on athletes. Part four addresses the more contentious areas of psychological factors, nutrition, intestinal infections, and the role of essential fatty acids in the syndrome while in the fifth part possible future avenues of research are discussed.

This is not an easy-to-read guide to post-viral fatigue syndrome for busy general practitioners, but is certainly a useful and valuable reference book for postgraduate libraries.

B D CALDER
General practitioner, Helensburgh, Strathclyde

DIABETES

David Kelleher
Routledge, London (1988)
99 pages. Price £9.99

The experience of the treatment of diabetes may be worse than that of the disease; this is one of the main themes explored in this slim, well referenced volume. If *Diabetes* succeeds in reminding general practitioners to plan management in negotiation with their patients, taking into account the patients' social and psychological situation as well as the medical aims of treatment, it will have made an important contribution.

The balance of the book is rather surprising as a large proportion relates to medical aspects: aetiology, epidemiology and issues in delivery of care. Undue emphasis is given to the use of insulin pumps, now fallen from use in favour of insulin pen devices which receive no mention.

The sections on the experience of diagnosis and treatment, issues of compliance and the impact of diabetes on social relationships are illustrated by quotes from patients interviewed by the author. I was curious to know more of these disembodied voices. How were the patients selected? What was the content of the interviews?

Kelleher points out the importance of improving communication between people with diabetes and their doctors. I was therefore surprised that recent studies of the effect of consultation styles and of the doctors' own health beliefs as well as those of their patients on clinical and social outcomes were not mentioned.

Despite these shortcomings, this book is a serious attempt to bring together medical, sociological and psychological perspec-

tives of diabetes and its care. In the future, greater success might be achieved if sociologist and clinician work more closely together from the outset.

ANN-LOUISE KINMONTH
Reader in primary medical care, University of Southampton

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT OF INSOMNIA

Colin A Espie
John Wiley, Chichester (1991)
260 pages. Price £16.95

When there is talk of doctors being sued for prescribing habit forming benzodiazepines for insomnia, a book dealing with a completely different approach should find a ready market. This one is written by an experienced clinical psychologist who has made a special study of the alternative psychological approaches to the problem of insomnia.

After an introduction to the mechanisms of sleep and sleep disorder, there is an important chapter on the assessment of patients. Here we are encouraged to find out what the patient knows and believes about sleep as well as putting the sleep problem in the context of the patient's life as a whole. The management of insomnia is then divided into a section on non-specific treatment and advice applicable to all sufferers, followed by specialized approaches: relaxation based, cognitive treatments and stimulus control procedures. A further chapter compares these approaches and assesses the evidence of their usefulness. The final chapter turns from the 'unspoilt' patient who has never taken a benzodiazepine and discusses the management of the insomniac who is dependent on hypnotic drugs. This chapter provides a gently reproving review of existing general practice management.

I enjoyed reading about a common complaint which I often find difficult to treat. Most general practitioners would, I think, benefit from dipping into this book, concentrating on the assessment and non-specific treatment and following up other chapters if they are of particular interest. Like all specialist texts, however, it has to carry a health warning of its own because very few of my patients who present saying 'I can't sleep doctor' will require the more specific managements outlined here. The strength of the book, then, is in describing an alternative approach to the prescription pad which can make us feel more confident in the management of all such patients. I recommend it for the practice library and for reference.

GEORGE FREEMAN
Senior lecturer, Primary Medical Care, University of Southampton

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Retainer Scheme GP wanted for two sessions, per week in two partner East London Practice. Man or woman doctor considered. Up to one year available. Days negotiable. Attached staff. Computerisation in progress. 3,700 patients. Enquiries, CV, and covering letter to:

Mrs T Harris
Practice Manager
17 Turley Close
London
E15 3JD

Tel: 081 534 2515/555 0197

RCGP

Corporate
Development
Unit



College of General Practitioners, 14 Princes Gate, Hyde Park, London SW7 1PL. Telephone 071-581 3232 ext 265.

ACCOMMODATION AND MEETING ROOM HIRE

Members of the College are welcome to stay at 14 and 15 Princes Gate; early booking is recommended. Bed and breakfast is available. Public rooms may be hired subject to availability. Please contact the Accommodation Secretary, Corporate Development Unit, The Royal