



PREVENTING HEART DISEASE

Jeanette Longfield
Consumer's Association with the Coronary Prevention Group,
 London (1991)
 192 pages. Price £8.95

This is a clearly written summary of the evidence on the prevention of coronary heart disease, attractively illustrated by the Coronary Prevention Group's characteristic cartoons by Larry. It gives a simple but accurate view of the consensus of informed opinion on all the areas of epidemiology involved but unlike much health education literature, it admits the existence of doubt and addresses the reasons for it. It also includes sound practical advice on how to achieve changes in risk factors.

Since *Preventing heart disease* is clearly designed not for doctors but for intelligent lay people, I asked an intelligent lay person for his opinion. Although like me he found the book interesting and readable, he wondered whether he or anyone else in good health would have the commitment to read almost 200 pages on the subject. The book is more likely to be bought by someone who has already had a heart attack, or who knows that they or someone close to them is at high risk. If this is true then the sections on tertiary prevention (rather confusingly entitled secondary prevention) and on the pathology of heart disease are a little superficial. Another group of lay people who might read this book are those interested in the politics of health. It is sad therefore that the section on the political aspects of the prevention of coronary heart disease is so cursory.

Thus, although this is a book which one would like to see on public library shelves, one wonders who would read it, and whether it would be right for them.

P D TOON

Lecturer in general practice, Medical Colleges of St Bartholomew and the Royal London Hospitals

HANDBOOK OF PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

J Hasler, C Bryceland, L Hobden Clark and P Rose
Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh (1991)
 400 pages. Price £49.50

The reforms in the National Health Service have brought the term 'management' to the forefront of general practice publications in recent years. This loose-leaf folder attempts to bring together important items relating to practice management in the 1990s.

Following a brief introduction and background to the contractual obligations of general practitioners, there are five sections covering finance, employment, education, audit and management techniques. The main focus is on the organization of staff and financial management, with training, audit and the principles of management covered fairly briefly. The section on

employing staff is useful in relation to current regulations and ideas for appraisal. Sections on education and audit concentrate mainly on various requirements to satisfy regulatory bodies. Management techniques are highlighted by using examples of problem solving exercises but add little to what is well described in other publications. The appendices include useful addresses of suppliers of general practitioner computer systems but the additional information about notification of infectious diseases and overseas travel is probably available in most practices already.

It is a bulky and heavy document with a lot of check-lists and regulations. Its usefulness will depend on the extent to which those who acquire it find the loose-leaf format user-friendly, and keep it up-to-date by inserting the promised replacement pages.

Further development of the manual would benefit from a recognition that terminology used in England does not always apply throughout the United Kingdom, for example, the family health services authority is not a term within health boards in Scotland, and the Scottish equivalent of PACT (prescribing analyses and cost) is SPA (Scottish prescribing analysis).

The *Handbook of practice management* seems to be aimed primarily at practice managers who could find it a useful reference manual.

JOHN BAIN

Senior research fellow, Department of General Practice University of Edinburgh

MAKING SENSE OF AUDIT

Donald Irvine and Sally Irvine (eds)
Radcliffe, Oxford (1991)
 162 pages. Price £12.50

The book provides an excellent introduction for those who are embarking on audit and tackles many of the key questions, including what audit is, who does it, how to do it, how to set standards, how to collect and analyse data, how to feed back information, how to manage change and how to cope with the issues of confidentiality. In addition, it contains a series of 15 case studies of audits carried out by general practitioners in the northern region.

I have only three minor criticisms. The section on standard setting describes the importance of taking account of the work of others and of making reference to published work. Advice is given to seek the help of the local postgraduate centre librarian but much of the relevant literature is poorly classified and difficult to find. Despite the existence of specialized audit databases there is a lack of a central enquiry service which can answer the question of whether a standard exists and who set it. This may be an area where the Royal College of General Practitioners could provide a valuable service.

My second criticism concerns the section on data collection