



THE STRATEGY OF PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

Geoffrey Rose

Oxford University Press (1992)

138 pages. Price £17.50

This book is a gem. In it, Professor Geoffrey Rose presents eloquently and succinctly the case for prevention. He emphasizes that disease and risk are generally a continuum with no sharp distinction between the normal and the abnormal — an observation made almost 40 years ago by Sir George Pickering (whose registrar Rose was) in relation to hypertension.

The consequences of this are broadly twofold: that shifting the distribution curve to the left is an essential component of prevention and that action by many is required to achieve benefit for a few — the so-called 'prevention paradox'; conversely, a preventive measure which brings large benefit to the community may offer little to each participating individual. This is not to deny that identification and management of those at high risk are worthwhile, but they can only be supplementary to the population, mass strategy. Prevention is essentially a public health issue.

The strategy of preventive medicine covers the principles of preventive medicine in an admirably lucid way, with illustrative examples. I particularly liked the example which suggested that 'businessmen nowadays are more likely to grow rich by mass sales of a cheap product than by selling a small number of Rolls Royces'. Arguing for more effective implementation of measures of known efficacy — the application of epidemiological knowledge — Rose reminds us that such application could halve premature mortality in terms of years of life lost below the age of 65 years.

With the current emphasis on prevention, this book should be required reading for all involved — policy makers as well as all those in health care professions. It should be in every practice library.

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ABC OF VASCULAR DISEASES

John H N Wolfe (ed)

British Medical Journal, London (1992)

79 pages. Price £12.95

The prevalence of vascular diseases in an ageing population, new, often non-invasive, techniques for the diagnosis and management of these conditions, and a more complete understanding of their natural history make the *ABC of vascular diseases* a timely publication. As suggested in the foreword by H H G (Felix) Eastcott, the St Mary's Hospital school of vascular

surgeons in London have succeeded well in producing a series of practical messages and clear guidance for those at the sharp end of diagnosis and aftercare. The notion that peripheral vascular disease is an expression of generalized arterial disease is well made.

The possible risk factors and their avoidance or control are restated. However, the assertion that cigarette smoking combined with a total cholesterol level of 6 mmol l⁻¹ and a diastolic blood pressure of 85 mmHg trebles the risk may come as a shock. A large number, if not the majority, of our middle aged and elderly patients will have the latter two measurements. The message regarding cigarette smoking could not be clearer.

For those using Doppler ultrasound, Andrew Nicolaides' guide to the assessment and localization of leg ischaemia is a model of clarity while the contributions covering rehabilitation of the amputee, convalescent problems in arterial surgery and the late complications of arterial grafts will be well appreciated.

We learn that up to 1.5% of deaths in western society result from rupture of an aortic aneurysm, with a 2% prevalence of abdominal aneurysm in men aged over 65 years. Clearly a high index of suspicion may save many lives. A screening programme would seem to offer results at least as cost effective as cervical screening.

This publication is full of useful and readily accessible information, keenly priced and is a must for the practice library.

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GENERAL PRACTITIONER EDUCATION: UK AND NORDIC PERSPECTIVES

M Lawrence and P Pritchard (eds)

Springer, Heidelberg, Germany (1992)

176 pages. Price DM 28.00

This book contains a collection of papers recording the proceedings of a conference. Many of its readers will be those who attended the conference, and since it was held over two years ago much of the subject matter is out of date or has been overtaken by events. Inevitably its interest will vary according to the individual contributor, but since many of the subjects covered are similar, one is left feeling that the wheel has been continuously reinvented. I doubt that many readers will want to read all the papers but, nevertheless, by selective browsing, one will find much of interest.

The first part of the book is made up of papers presented by academics from departments of general practice in the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Finland. Each section has a preface written by the editors of the book.