



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.

GODFREY FOWLER

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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.

E D COOKE

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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.

The UK contributors will be familiar to general practitioners in the UK and their views may also be well known; the Nordic contributors may be less well known to British readers. It is quite surprising to learn that the problems of vocational training are universal. However, these problems are being tackled with equal enthusiasm by each of the countries involved in the conference.

The second part of the book describes the forms of health care available in the different countries and makes interesting reading. It reinforces the view that governments of any political hue want to show the rest of the world how much they care but are not very ready to put money into training.

On the whole, a useful book for the academic library, but not one which is likely to appeal greatly to the general reader.

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HIV AND AIDS — MANAGEMENT BY THE PRIMARY CARE TEAM

Practical guides for general practice 16

Adrian Moss

Oxford University Press (1992)

104 pages. Price £10.50

As with all the other titles in this series, this small monograph is intended as a straightforward guide for doctors who are not specialists in the areas covered; as such it succeeds admirably. Adrian Moss writes in an easily understood fashion and illustrates most of his points with case histories. Unusually for this sort of book, he emphasizes that the names in the cases are real. He starts with chapters about the natural history of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection and what makes it different from other infections, passes through the clinical and laboratory aspects and then on to the medical and paramedical implications. These latter aspects are particularly well dealt with; Adrian Moss applies a sympathetic view very much in keeping with the primary care setting.

Aspects as diverse as general health and HIV positive people owning pets are considered and the book finishes with a chapter on palliative care at home. The book is referenced, although the number of references could usefully be increased; at the end there is a short bibliography and glossary of terms.

In summary, *HIV and AIDS — management by the primary care team* is an excellent introduction for general practitioners who are interested in the area but have no expertise. It should help to diffuse much of the mystique surrounding the syndrome and help move its care into primary care where it so firmly belongs.

J SHAPIRO
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MOVING TO AUDIT: AN EDUCATION PACKAGE FOR HOSPITAL DOCTORS AND GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

Centre for Medical Education, Ninewells Hospital and Medical School, Dundee (1992)

128 pages. Price £29.00 (resource book only £12.50)

This package comes in a glossy folder and comprises a resource book, a set of challenges, a series of audit activities and a newsletter.

This adventure into distance learning involves a commitment

from the doctor and a persistence sufficient to allow the development of a relationship with the academic centre, the University of Dundee. Without that commitment and interactive learning experience any review is somewhat hypothetical. Not knowing what the challenges or the planned activities are is a bit like embarking on a mystery coach tour with the only certainty being to return home to the starting point having completed some sort of circle.

What is possible is to try to assess the resource book itself. This one is strong on 'marketing'. The page layout is modern and the right margin is interspersed with cartoons and other large print signs. As to the content, it is a workmanlike introduction to audit with sensible references. It gives adequate examples to illustrate particular points but occasionally chooses from outside medicine when an internal example might have been more apposite. To illustrate sampling bias by citing the 1936 telephone survey prediction of Roosevelt's defeat in the United States of America election may not perhaps have been appropriate.

However, the final judgement must come from the participants and the relationship they build with the academic team. The evidence from the folder would suggest that the University of Dundee knows what it is doing and will develop the materials, the challenges and the activities to meet the needs of its enlarging student population.

STEPHEN FARROW
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