



### **TUTORIALS IN GENERAL PRACTICE (second edition)**

*Michael Mead and Henry Patterson  
Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh (1992)  
224 pages. Price £14.95*

I read the first edition of this book with enthusiasm when I was a trainee in 1984. It was the first of its kind to present factual information about common clinical conditions occurring in general practice. Nine years later the authors have produced a second edition, with an introductory chapter on the tutorial and with new chapters on topics such as the new contract for general practitioners, hormone replacement therapy and the prevention of coronary heart disease.

The chapter headings are well chosen and many of the factual and clinical aspects of the topics are well covered. However, I found the lack of references disappointing, for example for the evidence supporting short courses of antibiotics for urinary tract infection. Some topics are dealt with incompletely. There is no mention of Peter Maguire's work on how to break bad news.

The main criticism of this book is that it is too didactic in style and encourages neither a patient centred approach to general practice by the trainee, nor a learner centred approach to education. There is no discussion about how to put clinical knowledge into practice, for example in the use of role play.

The authors are experienced trainers and I would have valued their ideas about preparation for a tutorial, tutorial assessment, and their views on how to recognize when a trainee is ready to explore something new.

The book provides a sound basis for a clinical approach to common general practice problems, but in my view does not discuss the awareness centred approach which I believe trainers and trainees need to develop mutual learning and growth.

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### **BALANCING DREAMS AND DISCIPLINES**

*Sally Irvine  
Royal College of General Practitioners, London (1992)  
137 pages. Price £13.50*

The title for this book is intriguing and gives no real clue as to the subject matter. In fact it comes from a quotation 'The years ahead will be best of all for those who learn to balance dreams and disciplines' (Kanter RM, 1989).

One would expect to have a book on management from this author and indeed, that is what it is, but in an unusual format. The book begins with a case history of the problems faced by the practice partners in a health centre. Certainly the comments, interpractice partnership relationships and problems are familiar

and are obviously derived from the author's activities as a management consultant visiting many practices. The case history acts as a basis for the various issues which are then addressed using management techniques.

In her introduction the author states her intention to bridge the gap between management principles as applied to most businesses and those applied to general practice. In many respects, this has been achieved and the extensive use of examples from general practice to illustrate the various points demonstrate the author's familiarity with the problems.

The book is readable, entertaining and informative, but those readers with little knowledge of management will only find the broad outline of principles here and will have to go elsewhere for the detail. 'Away days', during which practice teams develop their team strategies, are becoming increasingly popular and *Balancing dreams and disciplines* would be valuable preparatory reading for practice managers and partners before embarking on such an exercise.

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### **PATIENTS, POLICIES AND POLITICS**

**Before and after working for patients**

*John Butler  
Open University Press, Buckingham (1992)  
150 pages. Price £32.50 (h/b), £12.99 (p/b)*

Margaret Thatcher announced her review of the National Health Service in January 1988 and the subsequent events left deep and lasting impressions on the medical profession. As a result it may be difficult to persuade some doctors to look again, through the eyes of John Butler, into the campaign of reform and its background. Somehow, however, they should be persuaded to do so in order to enjoy this excellent and critical account of the train of events which followed the publication of the white paper *Working for patients*.

The book provides a well referenced, balanced and carefully collated interpretation of the political processes, of the reform process and the resulting reactions. The many uncertainties and the background to some of the puzzling features of the campaign become much clearer, as do the roles of some leading players.

It is a pleasure to be able to enjoy such an engaging delivery while at the same time admiring the weight of the author's authority and pondering on the eventual outcomes.

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