

the general practice setting. Joanne Downton has set out to explain what happens in the multifactorial act of falling in order to make interventions more effective, and to eliminate the negative attitude to this important subject. In this she is largely successful.

The result is an academically respectable work which has been thoroughly researched, largely from the North American literature. Chapters cover epidemiology, the consequences to individuals and society, reasons for falls, clinical and nursing management, and prevention. There are useful tables, figures, and illustrations. Though some case reports are included, one begins to question the competence of the general practitioners who referred these patients and one begins to feel the hospital consultant's limited experience of the community. This is particularly noticeable in the vague statements made, such as the handrails should be 'appropriately shaped' (I remember that Trevor Howell advised a diameter of 5 cm decades ago), or that chairs should be 'high enough' to allow safe transfer, when it is known that a seat height of 42 cm is appropriate and that chair arms should extend forward beyond the padded area of the arms to allow both grasp and propulsion. No mention is made of the need for flat soled shoes for those with Parkinsonian gait in order to avoid heel trap, or how to ensure safety for those with outside toilets.

The section on academic neurology concerning baroreceptor reflex pathway stimulation and transient reflex asystole would be better brought home to practitioners by suggesting that they advise short, thick-necked, middle-aged men of growing corpulence to avoid wearing a tight collar. Such advice would attract rather than isolate the general practitioner reader to a book of which only 5% deals with prevention.

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HANDBOOK OF DIABETES

Gareth Williams and John C Pickup (eds)
Blackwell, Oxford (1992)
117 pages. Price £18.50

This is undoubtedly the age of sequels, the *Handbook of diabetes* following the *Textbook of diabetes*. The handbook is condensed but not easy to read. It is presented as a distillation of the larger work and all 120 contributors of the original are listed with their qualifications and place of work. In this respect it has all the disadvantages of a liqueur, being too rich for consumption during the day, but none of the benefits, leaving no afterglow. It is highly selective in the material which it presents. For example, it gives no information about metformin, while devoting a chapter to insulin metabolism and C peptide which seem to have virtually no clinical relevance or application in primary care.

This is not a book for the general practice library. Indeed, with the exception of three good sections on the complications of diabetes, it is hard to see who would find it useful. With 69 photographs and 82 colourplates one is tempted to think this must be good value, but is a table of the six examples of mutant insulin genes and their amino acid sequences required in a small handbook directed at 'health professionals ... who work outside hospital'? Like most sequels it lacks the coherence and purpose one expects of a new venture.

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