

focused on those with greatest needs. Functional assessment is seen as the appropriate approach in seeking to improve the quality of life for older people. There is a helpful section on health checks for people in nursing or rest homes.

From local knowledge I am aware that practices are attempting to assess the health needs of their elderly patients in a wide variety of ways. Many practices have expressed a wish for clear guidance on the appropriate methods of assessment for their elderly patients and this occasional paper contains all the relevant information.

As one of the editors of *Occasional paper 35*, I have a vested interest in suggesting that *Occasional paper 59* should be seen as part of the package which includes the two previous occasional papers. Having had no part in the creation of *Occasional paper 59*, I am able to recommend it unreservedly. I expect that it will become the standard reference for practices as they develop systematic programmes of anticipatory care for their elderly patients.

GRAHAM BUCKLEY

General practitioner, Livingston, West Lothian

MAKING SENSE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Sally Irvine and Hilary Haman

Radcliffe Medical Press, Oxford (1993)

171 pages. Price £12.50

As stated in the preface of this book, people are the most expensive resources in a practice. This is certainly true as staff budgets become eroded and staff numbers expand in many developing practices. Although management is viewed as a series of frameworks and structures used to achieve tasks, in fact it is effective interpersonal communication which makes for a successful management outcome. General practitioners have little formal training in management skills and are so busy coping with the day to day pressures that the importance of the relationships within the practice team is often forgotten. Few practices can function now without a practice manager and it is his/her role to facilitate teamwork and to see that limited resources, including people, are used as effectively as possible.

The books in the *Making sense* series are intended to explain basic principles of a particular subject and guidelines for their application. This one on personnel management is no exception and is written by two authors with extensive management experience including work in general practice.

The content of the book is much as one would expect, with chapters on recruitment, employment, training and many other subjects. A popular technique at present is staff appraisal. There is a good discussion about this, the pitfalls and the preparation required, which practices contemplating staff appraisal procedures will find valuable.

The text is clear and concise and liberally sprinkled with examples to illustrate a point. A case history of a practice is followed throughout the book to illustrate various issues in a realistic and graphic way.

This is a brief, well written and interesting book which sets out the basic principles of personnel management. It contains points to be aware of in these litigation conscious days of employment law. Most practice managers and general practitioners will find information of relevance to their staff management.

KEITH BOLDEN

Senior lecturer in general practice, University of Exeter

ABC OF DERMATOLOGY (second edition)

K Paul Buxton

British Medical Journal, London (1993)

98 pages. Price £12.95

Dermatology is a difficult subject. It not only requires the taking of a good history (which can be underrated by the inexperienced) but also an appreciation of the colours, textures, shapes and patterns associated with diseases of the skin. To add to the difficulty, the large standard texts are often impenetrable without at least a differential diagnosis. Thankfully, there are a number of introductory texts available to the non-specialist and this is one of the best I have read.

The first *ABC of dermatology* was published in 1988. Its aim was to use a few common key conditions as a basis for comparison with other skin diseases. For the general practitioner, this is an excellent approach as these key conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, acne and fungal infections are the ones seen most frequently in the surgery. This new edition contains more detailed information on malignant melanomas, the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). There is also a short, but particularly informative, section on dermatological prescribing.

Buxton and his colleagues use a variety of techniques to convey a large amount of information in a relatively small space. These include line diagrams to show the usual distributions of rashes, and boxes containing summaries or important points. Best of all, this book contains many colour photographs. Though they are small, the vast majority are clear and easily interpreted. The accompanying text is concise and yet retains ample detail.

I will keep my copy within arm's reach in the surgery.

JAMES MAITLAND

General practitioner, Aberdeen

Royal College of Physicians of London

DIPLOMA IN CHILD HEALTH

The Diploma in Child Health is designed to give recognition of competence in the primary care of children and is particularly suitable for General Practitioners and Clinical Medical Officers.

The next examination will be held on Tuesday 18th January 1994. Application forms and the necessary documentation and fees must reach the College by Friday 19th November 1993.

Experience of twelve months in the care of children is recommended before candidates apply to sit the examination.

Possession of the Diploma in Child Health is regarded as satisfactory for accreditation of General Practitioners in Child Health Surveillance.

Further details and an application form may be obtained from:

**The Examinations Office
Royal College of Physicians of London
11 St Andrew's Place
Regent's Park, London NW1 4LE
Registered Charity Number 210508**