



### ALCOHOL HOME DETOXIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT

David B Cooper  
 Radcliffe Medical Press, Oxford (1993)  
 130 pages. Price £10.50

Alcohol misuse is a common problem: how frequently it is seen by a general practitioner depends to a great extent on the doctor's knowledge and attitude in respect of the problem. Empathetic general practitioners will identify more people with an alcohol problem than those less willing to listen to their patients. Patients, too, are more likely to disclose their problem to a doctor who is not going to criticize them.

Too many people, including a number of professionals, assume that hospital inpatient care is essential for the management of alcohol withdrawal — the term I prefer to 'detoxification' which carries with it an unjustified air of mysticism. Home management is feasible and often preferable to hospital care. There are, however, certain essential prerequisites: first, the patient has to want to be helped; secondly, competent carers have to be available and willing to cope; and thirdly, the general practitioner has to be prepared to devote the time and accept the responsibility. A nurse trained in the home care of alcohol withdrawal can substitute for part of the general practitioner's role but, ideally, and for the best chance of success, both a general practitioner and a nurse should be available and working together as a team.

For the professionals, willingness is not the only requisite. Knowledge is essential and that is where *Alcohol home detoxification and assessment* can help. It has been written by a nurse and the intended readers are his fellow nurses. This book is so well written I have no hesitation in recommending it for the practice library.

Do I have any criticisms? Yes, but they are minor. I think the author has underplayed the role many general practitioners are already playing; I suspect because where the general practitioner is managing the patient, there has been little or no role for the nurse specialist. I was particularly pleased to see played down the roles of chlormethiazole and Parentrovite® (Bencard) in management. There are better, and certainly less addictive, alternatives to chlormethiazole, particularly for a patient not under extremely close supervision (too many alcoholics are getting repeat prescriptions from their general practitioner for chlormethiazole while they are still drinking). Parentrovite administered intramuscularly can be painful and also carries the risk of anaphylaxis. All of the vitamins, including thiamine — which is the only essential supplement needed — can be given orally with no loss of efficacy.

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### COUNTING ON QUALITY: A MEDICAL AUDIT WORKBOOK

Oliver Samuel, Paul Sackin and Bonnie Sibbald  
 Royal College of General Practitioners, London (1993)  
 115 pages. Price £13.50

The authors of this book stress in the preface that general practitioners should enjoy audit. Perhaps this is an overstatement but certainly this book would help the wayward find the path to meaningful audit and an understanding of the process of audit. The book, with its renowned authors, comes from the already well established stable of audit at the Royal College of General Practitioners.

Textually, the layout of this book cannot be criticized and the insertion of tasks to be attempted leads to an enthusiasm to include these tasks in one's own environment. The four main sections deal with the process of audit and help one through the morass of data to emerge, hopefully confident, at the end. Four excellently constructed appendices give firm support to anyone wavering during the processes described in the book.

Certainly no training practice, or indeed in reality any practice in this day should be without this small volume; and it is priced very reasonably.

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### DOCTORS AS MANAGERS: EXPERIENCES IN THE FRONT-LINE OF THE NHS

Roger Hadley and Don Forster (eds)  
 Longman Group, Harlow (1993)  
 183 pages. Price £17.50

The authors of this slim black book seek to teach about managerial styles and problems common within clinical work in The National Health Service. Ten case studies are drawn from essays by doctors taking an MSc in public health medicine.

I hope the review of management theory at the beginning of the book will not dissuade readers from tackling easier sections. The book's ample and useful references and glossary would have sufficed. I recommend that the conclusions be read first, which describe a cluster of factors in recruitment, training, career paths and work environments that account for doctors' blindness to the behaviour of organizations. The authors plead for systematic training of all doctors in the management of people. This section will be valuable for those such as practice and family health services authority managers who need to understand why doctors have such problems running organizations.