



A DOCTOR IN THE WILDERNESS

Walter Yellowlees
Janus Publishing, London (1993)
 224 pages. Price £7.95

The author, a fellow of the Royal College of General Practitioners, worked for 33 hard years in a country practice in the Scottish highlands. He paints a fascinating picture, embellished by case histories, of his changing pattern of work from 1948 onwards.

This first wilderness is followed by that of the wilderness of dietary controversy. After reading works by McCarrison and Cleave, Yellowlees met Cleave in 1960. He was impressed by Cleave's theory, based on epidemiological observations, that the refining of carbohydrates, particularly sugar, by fibre depletion led, by rapid absorption and overconsumption, to many common diseases of civilization. These include constipation, varicose veins, appendicitis, diverticular disease, diabetes, obesity, gallstones, coronary artery disease and possibly colonic carcinoma. Burkitt later popularized Cleave's ideas, emphasizing fibre depletion. The author discusses these subjects and adds interesting theories of his own, but his acceptance of meat fat, milk, cream and butter as components of a natural diet is debatable. Free living animals lay down little saturated fat compared with overfed indolent domesticated animals, while milk is natural only for babies: adults should chew food rather than drink it.

The third wilderness theme, pondered on while under fire in the army, concerns the gradual loss of loyalty, honesty, integrity and decency associated with the triumph of material values over spiritual. Yellowlees feels that only a return to Christian faith will bring us out of the wilderness.

This book covers a wide field of nutritional and other wisdom, and practitioners will find it interesting and thought provoking.

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CONTRACEPTIVE CARE: MEETING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS.

Psychosexual medicine series 6
Heather Montford and Ruth Skrine (eds)
Chapman and Hall, London (1993)
 232 pages. Price £14.95

The practice of good contraceptive care involves an understanding of a patient's sexual feelings and personality along with a biomedical profile. Recently, both the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists have increased their commitment to improve the quality of health care of women. The training for the MRCGP

examination has been modified accordingly and the RCOG has, in 1993, given birth to the Faculty of Family Planning and Reproductive Healthcare. This book highlights the insights and skills now needed by the practitioner.

The editors assume that the reader has basic expertise in the technical aspects of different contraceptive methods. They concentrate on the personal, psychological, sexual and social issues surrounding contraception. This book uncovers the hidden aspects in contraceptive care such as the unconscious factors, and also includes historical attitudes to fertility, philosophical comments on male contraception, and care of the young, the disabled and ethnic minority patients. The text covers many psychosexual problems in the contraceptive consultation; 13 out of 14 contributors to the book are members of the Institute of Psychosexual Medicine.

Dr Rosanna Pollen has written an excellent chapter on cultural perceptions and misconceptions but writes: 'Generalizations tend to fuel anxieties rather than enlarge one's views, and most health care professionals have to learn on the job.' I propose that generalizations or classifications are the only scientific tools available in epidemiology to measure populations, facts and groups. However, these distinctions should not be used for stereotyping ethnic groups or for discrimination.

Nevertheless this concise, authentic, and readable book is of immense value to general practitioners of the thinking kind.

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HIV AND AIDS

Graham Barter, Simon Barton and Brian Gazzard
Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh (1993)
 196 pages. Price £11.95

The authors of *HIV and AIDS* are all well known in this field and clearly have considerable experience in dealing with patients in London with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. The foreword is by Nick Partridge, director of the Terrence Higgins Trust, London, the major United Kingdom charity for the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). Despite the south-east UK emphasis (the practical information section has almost exclusively London addresses) this book does, more than most others in this area, address a slightly wider range of topics than that required by doctors dealing primarily with homosexual men with HIV infection. The format of the book is novel and interesting, comprising mainly of questions and answers under various headings such as epidemiology, virology and early HIV infection. This approach is successful as it highlights the many familiar questions often asked about HIV infection and many others which the non-expert would not have thought about. These