

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.

BASHIR QURESHI

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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

questions and answers are followed by one or two paragraphs of discussion and a description of the current state of knowledge or developing opinion in this area. This user-friendly and sympathetic approach is extended in the chapter on ethical issues where some case studies are included and discussion points highlighted. These topical and stimulating vignettes are something that will be useful for people involved in teaching or in postgraduate education.

The book is easy to read without complicated, unnecessarily scientific, detail but the only negative consequence is (as always with AIDS) the limitation of knowledge in certain key areas. There is the possibility that much of the understanding in the virology sections and epidemiology sections will be superseded within the next few years, and it may be necessary to update this book more regularly than most. It is good to see an updated explanation of the redundancy of some terms such as 'AIDS related complex'. However, it is obvious that the 1993 revision of the case definition of AIDS, to include invasive cervical neoplasia and recurrent bacterial chest infections as AIDS-defining illness, arrived since the drafting of the book. It is good to see a section on paediatric AIDS, HIV infection in women, and HIV and the injecting drug user, although there is little on the devastating social and domestic conditions that patients find themselves in, in the advanced or even approaching the advanced stage of HIV infection. Some of the scenarios involving drug users give a slightly unrealistic understanding of the reality of the lives of those people involved with drugs and the sex industry.

Altogether this is a stimulating and presentable book which would be useful for undergraduates, postgraduates and all those involved with HIV infection. It is a useful addition to any practice library and useful as a teaching source.

J ROY ROBERTSON

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JUST A GP: a biography of Professor Sir Michael Drury

Robin Hull

Radcliffe Medical Press, Oxford (1994)

144 pages. Price £14.95

This is a narrative account of some aspects and achievements of a great man, as seen by a friend and colleague who has himself played a part in helping to shape general practice in the latter half of this century.

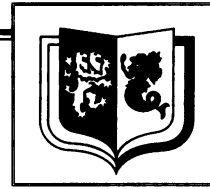
Against a wide canvas of political, academic and service pressures influencing patient care, the author depicts his subject as doctor, academic and, above all, as a man of great humour and humanity. The style is informal and the account is loaded with quotations from patients, friends and colleagues. Also included are a family tree and an entertaining account of the Drury heraldic memorial, together with an index.

Often amusing, sometimes irreverent, the book made entertaining reading, despite the inevitable bittiness associated with compressing into 144 pages the eventful life and times of the subject.

Robin Hull succeeds in capturing the flavour of the exciting times through which British general practice passed prior to the doldrums in which it currently finds itself. Although this is a book which those personally acquainted with Michael Drury will enjoy, it is also the sort of book a caring trainer might give to his or her trainee, and it should find a place in departmental libraries or university departments of general practice.

JAMES D E KNOX

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

GPs in Purchasing - Taking the Plunge

Wednesday 1 June in London

This conference will review different attitudes to involving GPs in commissioning. It is aimed at DHA and FHSAs managers and GPs. Speakers include Prof Richard Hobbs, Department of General Practice, University of Birmingham, Ian Carruthers, Chief Executive of Dorset Health Commission, Dr David Colin-Thome from Runcorn and Dr Fay Wilson from Birmingham.

Conference Fee £125

Effective Purchasing

Monday 27 June, Monday 11-

Wednesday 13 July in Birmingham

A course for those involved in purchasing, with a diagnostic day followed by a 3 day module. The course is practically oriented to help purchasing decision makers in clarifying problems and discussing potential solutions. Participants are welcome from Health Commissions, DHAs, FHSAs, GP Fundholders and GP Purchasing Consortia.

Course Fee £450

Further details of these events and others are available from the Health Services Management Centre, Park House, 40 Edgbaston Park Road, Birmingham, B15 2RT

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