

In the final chapter, Peter Kaim-Caudle speculates on the future for older people in western Europe. Except for Germany, the growth in the population of older people has passed its peak. Economic support for older people will in future depend less on the longevity of the population and more on patterns of fertility. The recently published *Social trends* indicates that many women are delaying having a first child until in their late 20s so as to be economically secure. Overall fertility in the UK remains at its 1990 level (this is one eighth below replacement level). This spacing of the generations, if it continues, means that the burden of care of an ageing population is likely to be most severe in the 30 years between 2020 and 2050. However, the economic burden of supporting the elderly population by people of working age is dependent on factors in addition to single demographic features. The level of pensions, unemployment rates and the productivity of those in employment have a major impact on the services and care which older people can expect. These economic social issues may seem a long way from general practice but they will surely shape the way in which health care for older people can and will be provided in the 21st century.

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#### ABC OF CHILD ABUSE (second edition)

Roy Meadow (ed)

BMJ Publications, London (1993)

75 pages. Price £12.95

This second edition of the *ABC of child abuse* gives a much better first impression as it has a new cover. A textbook about child abuse which declared on the front cover of its first edition that 'child abuse is the difference between a hand on the bottom and a fist in the face' had always seemed a contradiction in terms, with the implication that a hand on the bottom is alright. This indicates a gradual change in attitude from that in the 1960s when such a statement might have been so, but in the 1990s there is increasing concern about the place of corporal punishment.

This book is considerably larger than the first edition and includes new information about the sensitivity and specificity of diagnostic signs; new chapters on ophthalmological presentations and on the role of social services; new information relating to the role of child psychiatry and the function of case conferences to reflect current practice and the implications of the children act 1989; and the effect of new legislation, and the role of health professionals in preparing reports and presenting evidence in courts.

With all the changes in the children act the discussion on legal aspects was particularly apposite. It is disappointing that the second edition has not been used to make reference to the advantages (and disadvantages) of the children's panel system in Scotland. It would have been useful to contrast the two systems functioning in the United Kingdom. The suggestions on preparing legal reports were especially helpful, both generally and for reports relating to child abuse.

The chapter on sexual abuse was let down by the lack of reference to current research, in that the definition starting the chapter stated that it included any use of children for the sexual gratification of adults. This is sadly out of date as it is well recognized that children are abused by other children and teenagers as well as by adults. The references to careful examining of the mouth for signs of injury as a result of oral sex

is a good reminder. The general discussion relating to various aspects of sexual abuse is practical and appropriate to primary health care.

The book is well written and easy to read. In order to remember what one has read, there are excellent tables and illustrations. In spite of a few criticisms, it is a book that should be in every practice library and, more importantly, be read by all of the primary care team. The last chapter relating abuse in childhood to problems for the adult survivor is particularly pertinent.

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## MRCGP EXAMINATION – 1994/5

The dates and venues of the next two examinations for Membership are as follows:

#### October/December 1994

Written papers:

Tuesday 25 October 1994 at centres in London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Cardiff, Belfast, Dublin, Liverpool, Ripon, Birmingham, Bristol, Sennelager and Riyadh.

Oral Examinations:

In Edinburgh on Monday 5 and Tuesday 6 December and in London from Wednesday 7 to Monday 12 December inclusive.

The closing date for the receipt of applications is Friday 2 September 1994.

#### May/July 1995

Written papers:

Wednesday 3 May 1995 at those centres listed above.

Oral Examinations:

In Edinburgh from Monday 19 to Wednesday 21 June inclusive and in London from Thursday 22 June to Saturday 1 July inclusive.

The closing date for the receipt of applications is Friday 24 February 1995.

MRCGP is an additional registrable qualification and provides evidence of competence in child health surveillance for accreditation.

For further information and an application form please write to The Examination Department, Royal College of General Practitioners, 14 Princes Gate, Hyde Park, London SW7 1PU, or telephone: 071-581 3232.