



IMMUNIZATION: PRECAUTIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS (2nd edition)

George C Kassianos
Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford (1994)
 222 pages. Price £14.95

Since this is 'a reference book for all those working in general practice', the obvious source for comparison is the Department of Health's *Immunization against infectious disease*. Each is intended to provide readily accessible recommendations, so I chose three typical problems for which a general practitioner might require help.

Should we give pneumococcal vaccine to elderly diabetic patients? Both books say it should be given to diabetic patients, but neither is particularly encouraging. Relying on either book would make me inclined to overlook an important, cost-effective intervention.

Can we give hepatitis A vaccine to individuals who have the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)? Neither book gives easily accessible help, although a fairly lengthy read would suggest that it was safe (correct, and more easily confirmed by the *British national formulary*). This is perhaps unfair on the Department of Health's guide, which was last produced in 1992, the same year as the vaccine was introduced, but why was I still awaiting an updated version in December 1994 when I wrote this review?

Does a businessman travelling to Japan for one week in July need Japanese B encephalitis vaccine? The answer is yes according to *Immunization: precautions and contraindications* but no according to the Department of Health, who give far more practical advice about assessing the risk (principally, stays over one month in rural areas).

These examples make me reluctant to recommend this book. It appears to be a collection of material gleaned from elsewhere and needs field-testing if it is to become a serious competitor to the Department of Health publication that should be in every consulting room.

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STRESS SURVIVAL GUIDE

Caron Grainger
British Medical Journal Publishing Group, London (1994)
 54 pages. Price £6.95

Sadly, the very existence of this plucky little pamphlet about stress serves to indict not only those responsible for the current working conditions of today's young doctors, but also those who supervise their education and training. Were it not for their shortcomings, arguably, such publications would be superfluous. A hugely complex topic for so small a book, it is remarkable how

much the author — interestingly a non-clinician — has managed to pack into its 50 pages.

This booklet, aimed principally at junior hospital doctors, covers a lot of ground, inevitably some of it somewhat superficially. Nevertheless, it provides a useful introduction to an increasingly important subject, particularly for medical students, vocational trainees and young general practitioner principals. Although not purporting to be an authoritative reference work, it is rather scantily referenced. However, it aims to give a brief overview of some of the main issues and conflicts which lie behind the frequently stressful present day working conditions. Moreover, it attempts to provide readers with some useful insights into how to assess their own personal stress levels, before indicating various constructive mechanisms for stress reduction, and pitfalls to avoid. Finally, some useful tips and contact points of several help agencies are listed, including the essential advice to register with a general practitioner.

In short, the *Stress survival guide* provides a handy pocket comforter at a time when, as the author reminds us, according to Kilburg 'Professionals can be their own worst enemies.' The persistent concern is that those who most need to read and heed it, probably will not.

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INCONTINENCE

Diagnosis and management in general practice

Jacqueline V Jolleys
Royal College of General Practitioners, London (1994)
 84 pages. Price £15.40 (RCGP members £14.00)

General practitioners are in an excellent position to identify those who suffer from incontinence, both through direct enquiry about the symptom and by encouraging disclosure. Unfortunately many general practitioners lack confidence in the management of urinary incontinence. Jacqueline Jolleys, who is an expert in the field of incontinence, shows that after reading this book there is no reason to feel incompetent. Jolleys succeeds in convincing the reader that incontinence is not difficult to diagnose and manage.

First, general practitioners should take their time: the first appointment for assessment needs to be approximately three quarters of an hour. Secondly, it is important to gain insight into the pathophysiology of the different types of incontinence. Jolleys stresses the value of taking a careful history, because the majority of diagnoses can be made from the history alone. Thirdly, Jolleys gives guidelines about treatment. The section on management contains information on all types of incontinence,