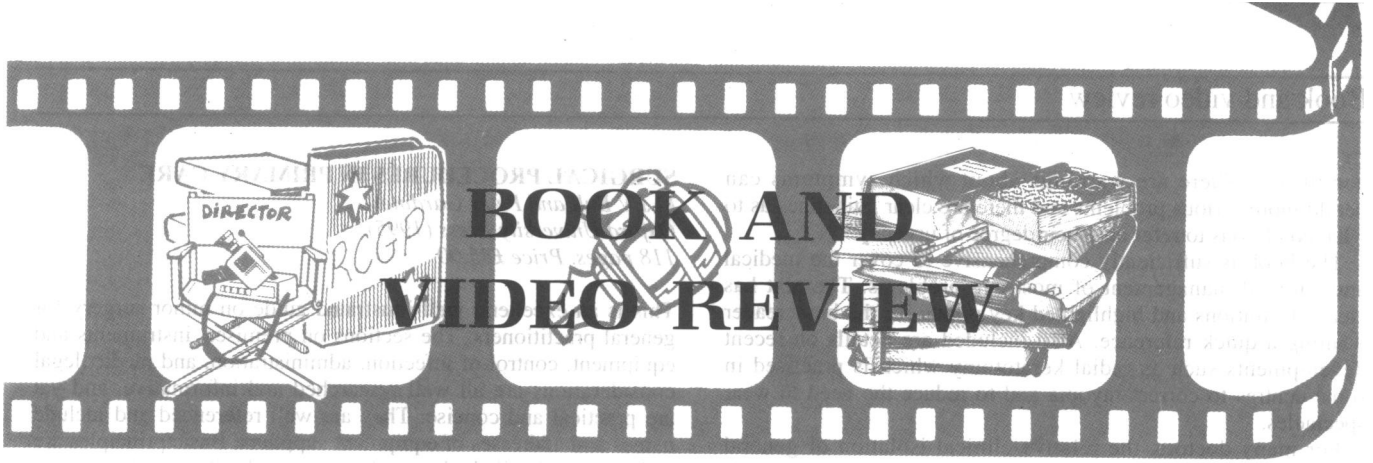

BOOK AND VIDEO REVIEW

MINOR SURGERY IN PRACTICE

Vija K Sodera
Cambridge University Press (1994)
356 pages. Price £45.00

This is a superb book on minor surgical procedures. The book begins with excellent advice on what to do and most importantly, on what to do when unsure and out of one's depth. There are boxed 'important points to remember' in each of the areas under consideration.

The text is divided into five main sections. The first section looks at medicolegal aspects, the operating room and equipment, sterilization, pre- and post-operative care, and precautions against the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and hepatitis B infections. The second section covers local anaesthetics, steroid injections, aspirations and sclerosant techniques. Surgical techniques, including incisions, wound closure, cautery, curettage and cryotherapy, and wound healing and complications are dealt with in the third section. The fourth section covers all minor surgical procedures on the minor surgical list and some of the more complex procedures for the more experienced doctor. The final section covers minor casualty work, including the management of wounds, burns, abscesses and foreign bodies.

For me, the highlights of this excellent book are the illustrations. These have been drawn personally by the author and are very clear. Sections of note are those on surgical instruments and on local anaesthetic techniques, especially steroid injections into joints and soft tissues.

Apart from the unusual way of citing the references, I have no problems with this book. There is a great deal of good, sound advice. *Minor surgery in practice* deserves to become a standard work on the subject.

DAVID WALL
General practitioner, Sutton Coldfield and regional adviser in general practice, West Midlands region

THE INCOMPETENT DOCTOR: BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Marilynn M Rosenthal
Open University Press, Buckingham (1995)
192 pages. Price £37.50 (h/b), £12.99 (p/b)

This book is one of a series that contributes to the debate about major issues in the health service and explores future policy directions. It is well written and researched by an American sociologist who takes an impartial look at how we in the United Kingdom deal with the 'problem' or 'incompetent' doctor. It is readable and full of anecdotes that illustrate the reluctance of the medical profession in the UK to pass judgement on fellow doctors and to take steps to confront incompetent colleagues.

The book begins by setting the scene, examining why the incompetent doctor is allowed to practise for so long before action is taken. A range of problems and examples of incompetence are described: inexperience and work pressures, interpersonal or personality conflicts, ageing and impairment, apparent lack of knowledge or skill and criminal behaviour. The examples given show how doctors collude with an incompetent colleague to deny the existence of a problem, and resist taking action.

Rosenthal follows the informal mechanisms brought into play once a doctor has been identified as a 'problem' — a quiet chat, protective support from colleagues or diverting patient flow away from the incompetent doctor.

After reading the book one questions whether the present system of self regulation of the medical profession is appropriate. However, I doubt that the profession would be willing to embrace Rosenthal's proposed solution of a total, integrated, peer review system linked to a self-regulatory mechanism.

RUTH CHAMBERS
General practitioner, Stone and Royal College of General Practitioners/Department of Health joint general practitioner stress fellow

THE EYE IN CLINICAL PRACTICE

Peggy Frith, Roger Gray, Sally MacLennan and Phillip Ambler
Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford (1995)
226 pages. Price £17.95

The authors of this fine book begin by acknowledging that most doctors have minimal exposure to practical, ophthalmological training, both at an undergraduate level and after they have qualified. Who better then to address this problem than a group of general practitioners with a special interest in ophthalmology?

This book admirably covers everything general practitioners need to know to enable them to deal with the 2% or 3% of consultations related to eye problems that occur in primary health care. It also covers the sort of questions that patients ask and practical matters that may not occur to a consultant ophthalmologist writing a textbook aimed at a non-specialist readership.

Advice is given on the use of basic equipment, with suggestions on what conditions can reasonably be managed by the average general practitioner who has no specialist interest in eye