



EYE EMERGENCIES: DIAGNOSIS AND MANAGEMENT

Lennox A Webb

Butterworth Heinemann, Oxford (1995)

200 pages. Price £15.99

This book provides accurate and common sense management for all common eye emergencies. It is conveniently pocket sized, and is simple to use. Readers will find the chapters on red eye, visual symptoms and postoperative eye problems particularly useful. The only chapter that lacks detail is the one that discusses eye examination and the use of equipment.

This book, however, reads as if eyes are not necessarily attached to bodies. There is no mention of the fact that individuals have emotions, fears, worries and a tendency for the unpredictable, or of how to deal with these.

The limits of allowable knowledge and territory between ophthalmologists and non-ophthalmologists are clearly defined, but from the ophthalmologist's perspective. By providing dogmatic guidance the guide may, inversely, perpetuate the lack of confidence in ophthalmology perceived by many junior doctors and general practitioners. There is little notion as to what should confidently be within the normal competence of the book's intended audience.

There is no doubt that this book will be a popular and useful acquisition for most hospital casualty departments and minor injuries units, and will quickly become well thumbed. Some general practitioners may find it useful as a quick guide, but those seeking to learn more about ophthalmology will be disappointed. It is what it claims to be — a common sense guide; a repair manual rather than an encyclopaedia.

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INFLUENCES ON COMPUTER USE IN GENERAL PRACTICE

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Michael Pringle, Paul Dixon, Roy Carr-Hill and

Audrey Ashworth

Royal College of General Practitioners, London (1995)

65 pages. Price £16.50 (RCGP members £15.00)

This is a thorough and comprehensive investigation of the state of general practice computing in the United Kingdom in 1991–92. The authors have used an extensive range of family health services authority and Department of Health data, as well as a postal survey of family health services authorities and general practice senior partners and interviews with family health

services authority computer officers. What emerges is a detailed account of computer use and perceived practices. It is striking how many different suppliers exist in the market; the great majority of suppliers are undercapitalized, having too few users to design new software quickly. The suppliers provide a service which generally rates poorly in terms of support and development. The majority of general practitioners surveyed expressed a need for advice on choosing a computer system. Barriers to successful computerization were reported to be cost, small list size and poor teamwork in the practice.

Family health services authorities were seen as having a major role in facilitating computer use through providing expertise and reimbursement for staff and training. The authors point out the deficiencies in the current inequitable and confusing reimbursement system for ongoing computer costs, recommending instead the application of a standard formula and greater forward planning by family health services authorities. Detailed examination of the data would suggest that computer use is not an end in itself but perhaps, like a training practice, is a marker for proactive, organized primary care.

The report's shortcomings are its age (three years is a long time in this field) and the lack of detailed comment on such national initiatives as family health services authority links, Read codes and data exchange standards. Further use could also have been made of the literature on medical decision making and computer use. One of the main barriers to effective computer use must be software designers' failure to address adequately the process of the general practice consultation. The report should, however, be of interest to family health services authorities and as background material for those thinking of computerizing their practice or of utilizing their existing systems more effectively.

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DIABETES IN THE REAL WORLD

Charles Fox and Anthony Pickering

Class Publishing, London (1995)

280 pages. Price £19.95

This is a rather different book from the usual textbooks on diabetes. The authors, a general practitioner and a consultant physician, both with a special interest in diabetes, have largely succeeded in relating the mass of advice and evidence about diabetes management to real life clinical situations. The book is targeted at less experienced practitioners and practice nurses involved in the management of diabetes in general practice. It does, however, have much to offer the more experienced. The