



BEDSIDE MANNERS: AN ANTHOLOGY OF MEDICAL WIT AND WISDOM

John Ballantyne

Virgin Publishing, London (1995)

266 pages. Price £9.99

This is an excellent and interesting collection of writings about medicine, many of which have been written by famous literary doctors. The anthology is wide ranging, covering subjects as diverse as how doctors should dress and the death of Chekhov.

Much of the book is given up to the patient's view of doctors and should perhaps come with a warning that it may offend those in the medical profession who suffer from chronic pomposity. Repeatedly doctors are portrayed as, at worst, 'money grabbing' and jealous of true talent among their peers and, at best, as kindly but ineffectual souls. Despite the (probably justified) iconoclasm of writers such as G B Shaw we are left with the feeling that, overall, doctors do more good than harm.

The book gives excellent insights into how it feels to be a patient, particularly when facing bureaucracy or medical aloofness. The sections on cancer and deafness are particularly good, with extracts from Solzhenitsyn's *Cancer ward* and a beautiful story by Eudora Welty about the delight of a young deaf boy who, for the first time in his life, could 'see' his words as his breath froze on a winter's day.

This is a book which is easy to read either in one go or, as the title suggests, in snippets at bedtime. It would be a shame, however, to read some of these gems while half asleep. *Bedside manners* would make a very pleasant Christmas gift.

BRIAN MCKINSTRY

General practitioner, Blackburn, West Lothian

TRAVEL-ASSOCIATED DISEASE

Gordon G Cook (ed)

Royal College of Physicians, London (1995)

179 pages. Price £15.00

The origin of this book was a day conference organized by the Royal College of Physicians in June 1994. Every general practitioner has to be interested in travel medicine since many patients will be seen by the general practitioner before going to or on returning from other countries. To evaluate this book I chose three current problems in travel medicine.

Precisely which travellers should be given hepatitis B vaccination? After 10 minutes' searching I discovered this World Health Organization recommendation: 'extended or frequent

travel to countries of high endemicity'. This was despite 11 pages being specifically devoted to the prevention and control of hepatitis B infection, and illustrates the drawback of this kind of compilation. It was never intended to address the needs of the general practitioner requiring succinct advice, hence it adds nothing to what most of us would have gleaned anyway.

What can general practitioners contribute to the prevention of malaria? This chapter makes interesting reading and from it I learnt that travellers to Turkey have had only four of the 11 319 cases of malaria imported into the United Kingdom in the last six years. It is always important to stress measures to minimize mosquito bites. Most fatal cases of malaria are associated with no or inadequate prophylaxis. Therefore we must stress compliance with prophylactic regimens rather than merely searching for the correct prophylactic drug (which is often a matter for compromise anyway).

Finally, what advice should be given to travellers with coronary heart disease? Despite several repetitions of the information that coronary heart disease is much more likely than infections to cause the death of an older person while abroad, we are given no guidance about the dangers of heat exhaustion or high altitude. One useful tip did emerge: in future when asked about the dangers of travel, my response will be that alcohol kills more travellers than plague, ebola virus and every other scare put together.

In summary: an interesting update for those with a special interest in travel medicine, but most general practitioners should look elsewhere for handy advice.

JOHN HOLDEN

General practitioner, Haydock, Lancashire

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK: GUIDANCE FOR GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

RCGP practice organization series

Richard Moore and Stephen Moore

Royal College of General Practitioners, London (1995)

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

I cannot speak more highly of this excellent book than to say that in my absence at the WONCA conference in Hong Kong, my practice manager when dutifully sorting my post spotted it, read it at once and asked me, after review, if she could keep it.

Any general practice with more than five employees after 1 January 1993 that fails to comply with health and safety at work regulations can be fined up to £5000 with a further £100 per day as long as there is a failure to comply with these regulations.

This book lists clearly the regulations and the occupational health hazards and is a helpful guide with practical audits and check lists. It deals in depth with the duties of employers and then gives valuable advice on maintenance of premises with particular reference to fire risks, visual display units, electrical hazards and maintaining equipment. Detailed advice is given on cross-infections with emphasis on waste disposal, hepatitis and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). The need for accident reporting is detailed, with a reminder about having planned first aid procedures rather than an ad hoc system. The book is greatly enhanced by 14 pages of audit protocols and data recording sheets which clearly have been well tried in general practice settings.

If I have not convinced you that you need two copies (one for the practice manager and one for the partners and registrar (trainee)) ask yourself the following questions: do I know the hepatitis B status of all the staff in the practice?; when was the last time there was a fire drill in the practice?; does the autoclave meet British Standard BS 3970?; do I know the display screen equipment regulations 1992?; what cold chain integrity checks are performed on vaccines in the practice?; and if, when there is no general practitioner or nurse on the premises, a patient with chest pain has a cardiac arrest, have the other practice staff been instructed in cardiopulmonary resuscitation?

This book can improve the quality of safety in your practice and may save the publicity and humility of a prosecution.

ROBIN STEEL

General practitioner, Worcester

FAMILIES COPING WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA: A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE TO FAMILY GROUPS

Jacqueline M Atkinson and Denise A Coia

Wiley, Chichester (1995)

284 pages. Price £14.95

Care in the community can quite often mean care by relatives. The ways in which families can support and sustain people with schizophrenia and, conversely, the contributions of families towards the exacerbation of schizophrenic illness in sufferers are therefore topics of major importance. This book comprehensively reviews the existing research in this area. It also deals with the practical business of setting up support groups and self-help groups for relatives of patients with schizophrenia. The different types of groups and various ways in which relatives can be helped are carefully described and the published data on the effectiveness of these groups are extensively reviewed.

The book is well written, with clear headings, and is a useful reference source for work in this area.

It is essential reading for any community psychiatrist or community psychiatric nurse who is actively involved in the long-term care of patients with schizophrenia. For any general practitioner who has a special interest in the care of mentally ill people, again it would be a useful book.

IAN C BUCHAN

*General practitioner, Livingston and hospital practitioner
in family psychiatry, St John's Hospital, Livingston*



THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND

MINOR SURGERY FOR GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

20-21 March 1996

A two day practical workshop on all aspects on minor surgical procedures including basic surgical techniques, cysts lipomas and abscesses, local anaesthesia, infection control, dermatological surgery, medico legal matters, joint injection, varicose veins and ingrowing toenails.

MANAGEMENT OF SPORTS INJURIES

25-26 April 1996

The College is holding a two day meeting in association with the British Orthopaedic Sports Trauma Association. The programme is led by an international faculty and will cover a wide range of issues related to the management of Sports Trauma including posterior cruciate ligament, patella tendinitis, shoulder instability in swimmers, and ankle arthroscopy. There is a free paper session and any submissions should be sent to the department by the end of December.

For further information please contact:

The Raven Department of Education

The Royal College of Surgeons

35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields London WC2A 3PN

Tel: 0171 973 2102 Fax: 0171 973 2117