



HANDBOOK OF DISEASES OF THE NAILS AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

DAR de Barker, R. Baran and RPR Dawber
Blackwell Science, Oxford (1995)
177 pages. Price £27.50 (pbk)
ISBN 0-865-42907-3

Have you been sufficiently troubled this past year by patients seeking therapy for nail afflictions to consider purchasing text? Even general practitioners with a specific interest in dermatology tempted by de Berker *et al's* publication will find that is more a reference text than a handbook.

This book, amounting to 169 A4-type pages, is extremely comprehensive with a very clear layout which is well punctuated by colour photographs. At times, however, it is a slave to taxonomy and it frequently fails to give direction in its attempts to be comprehensive. I was most looking forward to the chapter on the therapy of fungal nail infections, surely the most exciting recent development for dermatologists and general practitioners alike. I am not a lot clearer at the end of this read. Chronic paronychia in childhood we are told responds to 'antiseptics, emollient, anticandidal and steroid combinations'. The range of therapies for chronic fungal nail infection are listed, but the nettle is not grasped regarding their comparative strengths and weaknesses.

PETER HARRINGTON

*Lecturer in family medicine and general practice
 and general practitioner, Gorey, County Wexford*

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE: A MEDICAL COMPANION

Alistair Burns, Robert Howard and William Pettit (eds)
Blackwell Science, Oxford (1995)
159 pages. Price £19.50 (pbk)
ISBN 0-632-03731-8

In our ageing society, the care for patients with Alzheimer's disease is becoming an increasingly important part of the daily work in general practice. This book aims to take a broad look at the management of this disease in the primary care setting, in which the majority of patients are treated. As a Dutch general practitioner, I have read it with great interest, and feel that the book meets its objectives.

After an interesting historical introduction about dementia as a clinical concept, the book begins with chapters on epidemiology, aetiology and biological basis.

The authors are clearly experts in their field; however, as new insights develop rapidly in Alzheimer's disease, it is obviously difficult to present and select issues relevant for general practice

in a concise and readable manner. The clinical picture of Alzheimer's disease is described in detail, although largely from a hospital consultant's perspective. The emphasis is on the end-stages of dementia, and the diagnostic possibilities and difficulties over time in general practice are only mentioned in one of the later chapters.

The third author, William Pettit (a general practitioner), has written an excellent chapter about the view from primary care, and as there is no cure for dementia, I feel more emphasis should have been put on care issues. The overall accessibility of the book to family doctors could have been increased by the greater involvement of William Pettit in the final stages of its development.

HARM VAN MARWIJK

*General practitioner, Department of General Practice,
 Leiden University, The Netherlands,
 and Department of Primary Medical Care,
 University of Southampton*

SPORT, EXERCISE & MEDICINE

Jim McCracken and Idris Williams (eds)
University of Nottingham (1995)
Two volumes with an interactive PC disk
Volume 1, 182 pages; Volume 2, 172 pages
Price £37.50. ISBN 0853580448

There is a great need in this country for primary care to be more involved in sports medicine. Informed treatment and advice on problems concerned with sport and exercise are often required immediately. Until now, there has been a frustrating lack of up-to-date knowledge, data and advice available in an easily accessible form about the effect of exercise, and the various disabilities and chronic illnesses associated with it.

This new publication from the University of Nottingham has addressed this need. The contents have been edited by Jim McCracken and Idris Williams, and as befits experienced general practitioners and educators in general practice, the text is very clearly and logically presented. The various chapters have evolved from the 'Medicine' module (Special groups and health implications) of the successful Nottingham University MSC courses on Sports Medicine.

The publication has paid great attention to detail and concerns about exercise as it affects patients. There are chapters about the effect of exercise on all the major chronic illnesses and the problems that might occur. Other chapters cover the physiology of exercise and pregnancy, children and aerobic exercise, as well as exercise and sport for an ageing population.

There is a particularly thorough review of competitive sport for people with disabilities, which shows the wide and expanding

range of activities available, and the tremendous benefits to be gained in terms of physical and psycho-social well-being. The lessons to be learned from this chapter can be applied to all who have illnesses that require continuing care.

The text has been organized in such a way that information is readily found, but once dipped into, the books are not readily put down. An index would have made accessing information even easier, but this is not a major problem. The layout is clear and the lists of references and advice on further reading very comprehensive.

This neat boxed set will go into *my* library, but practice nurses and physiotherapists will want their own copies. The interactive disc is already a compulsive draw on the PC.

IAN MCGIBBON

*General practitioner and trainer,
Sudbury, Ashbourne, Derbyshire*

ABC OF BREAST DISEASES

JM Dixon (ed)

BMJ Publishing Group, London (1995)

74 pages. Price £13.95

This latest addition to the excellent ABC series collects articles on breast diseases originally published weekly in the *British Medical Journal*. Specialist authors from centres of excellence in the UK, and two others from the USA and Australia, contribute an overview of the subject, including practical guidelines for referral of patients with breast symptoms and an account of the current consensus on management of breast cancer at all stages from screening to care of those with advanced disease.

The book is attractively presented with excellent illustrations and flow charts. Its 70 pages of enjoyable reading provide a rapid update and clarification of a field of medicine where practice has changed considerably over recent years. I particularly valued the information about treatment of breast cancer in the elderly, and on risk factors and genetics, all areas in which I now realize my knowledge to have been deficient. There is an excellent chapter on psychological aspects, which is refreshingly free from dogma. I totally endorse the comment made there that 'it is what treating clinicians say about diagnosis and treatment that is critical in determining patients' psychological adaptation.'

In a short book on such a large subject, it is inevitable that there will be omissions. I would have welcomed further information on public health policy in the UK and elsewhere in relation to screening for and treatment of breast cancer, and more discussion of the management options which may be available. Media interest in health and widespread access to information technology increase the likelihood that general practitioners will be approached by patients, or more often their relatives, enquiring about further or alternative treatments they may have seen on television or learnt about from the Internet. It would be helpful for the doctor to know where to find help in answering such questions and to have some knowledge of the international context in which to set the didactic consensus presented here.

This book has been designed to help all doctors, particularly general practitioners, and to be useful to other health professionals who have contact with patients with breast problems. It should be a welcome addition to any practice library.

ANNE M DE BONO

*Occupational Health Physician,
Leicester General Hospital*

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ADOLESCENT CARE IN PRACTICE

22 March 1996 – Willerby Manor Hotel, Hull

This conference is part of a series of regional conferences designed by the RCGP Working Party on Adolescents to consider how primary care can respond more effectively to the unmet needs of teenagers. It is aimed at all who work in primary care, including medical, nursing and administrative staff. The conference will be opened by Dr John Potter, Chairman RCGP Humberside Faculty, and the programme will include members of the working party (Chris Donovan, Anne McPherson and Aidan McFarlane) as well as local speakers. Topics covered will include confidentiality, teenage sexual health, substance abuse and mental health. The organisers hope to receive ideas and contributions from those who attend in response to the speakers and during the afternoon workshop sessions.

The working party is keen that some adolescents should attend the conference and take part in the discussions. There will be a reduction of £10.00 for delegates who are accompanied by a teenager (places for teenagers are free, but available by pre-booking only as numbers are limited).

PGEA applied for.

Delegate fee £40.00 GPs/Paediatricians
(inclusive of VAT): £30.00 GP Registrars/Health Visitors/Nurses

For further details please contact: RCGP Courses, 14 Princes Gate, Hyde Park, London SW7 1PU.

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ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS COURSE

Course Director: Sally Irvine Course Leader: Hilary Haman

1/2 May 1996 & 9/10 October 1996

This two day course aims to equip participants with an appreciation of assertive behaviour in order to help them develop constructive relationships within their professional and personal lives. Managing conflicts at work and reducing stress are two of the issues addressed through giving participants the opportunity to practise the skills of giving and receiving criticism and saying No.

The course is aimed at those participants who behave "over assertively" as well as those who feel they could profit from the confidence gained from assertiveness training. This course is of particular benefit to general practitioners in their roles as partners and employers and any other members of the practice team who manage staff.

The delegate fee (inclusive of VAT) is £340.00 including lunch and refreshments on both days. PGEA applied for.

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL COURSE

Course Director: Sally Irvine Course Leader: Hilary Haman

25/26 September 1996

This is a two day course open to general practitioners and practice and health centre managers. It aims to provide an appreciation of performance appraisal, the opportunity to practise interviewing skills, including role play and the use of video, and to develop a plan to allow participants to introduce a staff appraisal scheme into their practice. This course is aimed at both newcomers to appraisal and those who have experience of appraisal but wish to revisit the subject. It is a highly intensive course and therefore limited to 12 participants only.

The delegate fee (inclusive of VAT) is £400.00 including lunch and refreshments on both days. PGEA applied for.

For further details please contact: RCGP Courses, 14 Princes Gate, Hyde Park, London SW7 1PU.

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