

month and one year. Any health care professional encountering this problem will find this book an immensely powerful aid to their work. In 1993, there were 536 sudden infant deaths in the UK: about one in 1400 live births. This is sufficiently uncommon that, when encountering this problem, the health care professional is unlikely to have all the necessary information immediately to hand. In 14 pages, the author rapidly and clearly describes the problem and its history, reviews the theories of cause and the evidence for these, and gives clear and important instruction as how to respond to the problem acutely and in the longer term.

Despite the infrequency of sudden death syndrome, we are involved in advising on its prevention every week and knowledge of the background evidence is invaluable for getting this message across.

The problems of early diagnosis of significant illness in infants, apparent life-threatening events and apnoea alarms are all dealt with clearly with reference to the available literature. References to background papers, sources of patient leaflets, and other work on sudden infant death syndrome and experiences of cot death and grief are listed. I have no hesitation in recommending this inexpensive volume packed with crucial information for inclusion on the shelf of every practice library.

TONY WRIGHT

*General practitioner,  
Somerset*

#### THE PARADOX OF PROGRESS

*James Willis*

*Radcliffe Medical Press, Abingdon (1995)*

*152 pages. Price £15.50 (pbk). ISBN 1857750632*

Those who want to know what the art of general practice is about will enjoy this book. The author started gently distilling his ideas over 10 years ago. *The Paradox of Progress* is about how general practitioners think and what they have to endure; of the subtleties of patient care in the community seen through the eyes of an old-fashioned intensely committed doctor. The account is sensitive, humorous and eminently readable, and offers the accumulated wisdom and vision of a deeply concerned doctor.

A dramatic change in family doctoring came in 1990. A new contract for general practitioners working within the National Health Service was imposed without agreement. The second theme of this book gives voice to the inevitable indignation that these changes evoked. The author becomes transformed into a paranoid reactionary resisting the 'central controllers' who try to direct his deeply personal patient care. The book turns into a one-sided polemic against the new management of the Health Service. Whereas earlier the descriptions of general practice are multifaceted and subtle, here the argument is black and white. The author just tilts his lance against the windmills of Quarry House in wild frustration. This should be essential reading for Health Service administrators to help them try to understand what it feels like to struggle against the difficulties and frustration of modern practice.

OLIVER SAMUEL

*Retired general practitioner, Pinner*

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