



A GOOD DEATH - A GUIDE FOR PATIENTS AND CARERS FACING TERMINAL ILLNESS AT HOME

Elizabeth Lee
Rosendale Press 1995
188 pages, price £8.99
ISBN 1872803164

Most people with advanced cancer would like to have the chance to remain at home to die. This small volume, sensitively written by a general practitioner, will be a useful resource of information and support to such patients and their carers. The book is written clearly and is easy to understand, containing useful lists of the resources available and a checklist for statutory benefits. Simple, practical advice is also given determining what to do after a death.

For patients and relatives who are often frightened about morphine treatment, there is an offer of reassurance with regard to the use of this drug and its role in symptom control. A variety of different symptoms are discussed and the treatments outlined.

This book contains excellent chapters that are concerned with the patient's psychological and social needs, with an exploration of common emotions such as denial and anger. A further chapter examines the advantages and disadvantages of hospitals, hospices and staying at home as a place to die.

The author is aware that, at times, relationships between patients and doctors can often break down. She describes situations where things can go wrong, usually owing to poor communication. However, some of her advice is a little controversial. At one point she suggests, 'Ask a district nurse to tell you who will look after you best and fight to get the doctor you want'. Such advice could provoke conflict within teams. Perhaps a more subtle approach towards this problem is required.

The author rightly identifies the central role of an interested GP and district nurse in determining the quality of palliative care provided at home. There are points in this excellent book that do need clarifying, however. One such example arises from Dr Lee's comment, '...unfortunately specialist nurses do not do much hands-on nursing'. Such statements as this reveal a misunderstanding of the basic advisory and support role of specialist nurses.

Overall, this is a useful book that should be read by those caring for patients and their families. More importantly, it is an indispensable guide for patients and their carers.

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MANUAL OF CHILDHOOD INFECTIONS

EG Davies, DAC Eliman, CA Hart, A Nicoll, PT Rudd
Saunders, London. 1996
393 pages, price £19.95
ISBN 0702018325

The British Paediatric Association is about to be born as the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. This manual has been prepared by a team of clinicians (three paediatricians, a microbiologist and an epidemiologist) commissioned by the Association. Naturally, this is a kite mark!

'What's in it for a busy GP?' you may say. A lot!

Part one is symptom-based and gives general guidance for the diagnosis and management of a child with a specific problem, such as a rash, a bone or joint infection, or a pyrexia of unknown origin. The chapters concerned with preparations for travelling abroad, an infection contracted abroad, and internationally adopted children, contain many practical tips.

Part two deals with 76 infectious diseases. It ranges from common illnesses, such as measles and chicken pox, to rare conditions such as amoebiasis and cat-scratch disease. Each disease is adequately described, thus allowing a busy doctor to sift through a maze of symptoms in order to reach a correct diagnosis and offer appropriate treatment.

Although the text is liberally peppered with tables, this handbook of infectious diseases contains no illustrations. This is a major omission; it is akin to forming a primary care team without a GP! Clinical pictures are vital for spot diagnoses and a reader may have to consult another book for pictorial guidance.

Nevertheless, the authentic information in this manual is of immense value for quick reference in a busy Friday evening surgery, not only for service GPs, but for others who deal with sick children in Britain and abroad.

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ABC OF SPORTS MEDICINE

Greg McLatchie, Mark Harries, John King, Clyde Williams (eds)
BMJ Publishing Group 1996
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ISBN 0727908448

This book is based on a series of articles commissioned by and published in the *British Medical Journal*. Readers will not be surprised, therefore, to find that the wide range of topics con-