



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
Price £15.95
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-

tained within are covered by authors particularly recognized for their expertise in those fields. The breadth of the subject matter is an indication of the way sports medicine and exercise science has developed rapidly in the UK in recent years, and is now accepted in academic circles.

The book is aimed primarily at doctors who have an interest in sports medicine; however, the way in which the book is presented is enticing and attractive enough for anyone with even a passing interest in the subject. Such areas as the musculo-skeletal problems of child athletes, women in sport, and overuse injuries are ones that any concerned family practitioner should know about. The chapters where the authors warned of the dangers of inappropriate therapy, and indicated clearly when referral was necessary, were particularly appealing.

The book reminds the reader how different sporting activities can produce quite different presenting problems. The clinician, once aware of these, will find the subsequent diagnosis and management of the problem that much easier and more satisfying.

The compact style of the book, and the inclusion of an excellent index, enables easy access to the relevant information — even, I dare say, for a GP in the midst of a busy surgery. Therefore, it is all the more regrettable that the authors, having whetted the reader's appetite, generally do not provide useful references for further reading on their subject matter. Nevertheless, this is a publication that deserves to be widely read and used at a time when young and old, both able and handicapped, are being encouraged to become involved in sport at every level.

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HOW TO WORK WITH SELF HELP GROUPS: GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONALS

*Judy Wilson
Arena 1996
Price £14.95
ISBN 185742280*

It is somewhat paradoxical that self help, which originally arose in opposition to conventional forms of professional assistance, should now become a field for co-operation and understanding. There can be no doubt that people experiencing chronic illness and a wide range of personal misfortunes do benefit from getting together with others like themselves. Not only do they gain personal assurance and support, but they can also learn about various forms and sources of practical help. It is here that nurses and social workers in particular, provided that they are sensitive and forewarned, can make significant contributions. Whilst doctors ought to know about local groups, they are much less likely to have time to become closely involved.

Judy Wilson is well experienced in this field and her book offers a guide to people who may be called upon to advise and assist. In some circumstances, a professionally trained person

may initiate a group, to fulfil a need that is not being met. Much more common is a request to work with a lay group, either on an occasional or on a day-to-day basis. Perhaps they are getting into difficulties or they want access to proven good practice. The professional, whilst offering support and encouragement, must be certain to avoid trying to take over. They should be honest about the pitfalls and difficulties and must themselves be prepared for groups to disintegrate or lose their impetus.

This book is rather repetitive, but it contains useful lists of basic principles, which should make it a valuable teaching aid. It is to be hoped that these modest guidelines should not offend the fiercest proponents of the self help movement.

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MAKING USE OF A CLINICAL AUDIT: A GUIDE TO PRACTICE IN THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS

*Maurice Kogan and Sally Redfern
Open University Press, Buckingham 1995
188 pages, price £14.99
ISBN 0335195423*

Audit and quality assurance have now become well established within the National Health Service (NHS). This book is based on projects sponsored by the Department of Health that were undertaken in collaboration with members of the professional bodies representing clinical psychology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech/language therapy.

Essentially, the book explains the nature of clinical audit and how it can be used in health care organizations. There is a very useful introductory chapter that defines modes of health care, quality assurance and quality improvement. Different methods of clinical audit and different methods of health outcomes, organizational structures for quality assurance, links with other quality assurance departments, and between purchasers and providers are also discussed. Throughout the book there is also an emphasis placed on multi-professional activity and the concept of multi-professional outcomes.

The book is easy to read and relatively informal, but quite informative. It differs from other books in that it looks objectively at audit and quality assurance with many working examples. The issue of quality in the NHS is very complex and this book will be useful for those in the health service and other related fields, and will help them to introduce and establish quality assurance in their workplace. However, this book will not interest everyday practising GPs and other primary health care workers unless they are already actively involved in setting up audit and quality assurance systems in their practices.

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