



TOBACCO AND HEALTH

Sir Richard Doll and Sir John Crofton (eds)
British Medical Bulletin 52 No 1 1996. Royal Society of Medicine Press

Tobacco smoking is the most important cause of premature death in developed countries and is rapidly becoming so in the developing world. Currently, about 3 million people die annually from this cause and this figure is expected to rise to 10 million over the next 25 years.

As might be expected from two such eminent editors as Richard Doll and John Crofton, their book provides an authoritative account of the knowledge acquired over the past 40 years about smoking as a behaviour, its health consequences, ways of combating it, and its promotion by the tobacco industry. All chapter authors are experts in their fields. For GPs and their primary care teams, there is a particularly useful chapter by Jonathon Foulds reviewing smoking cessation strategies and methods. This emphasizes the effectiveness of brief advice and encouragement given by primary health care professionals during consultations. Many studies have shown that, as a result of such brief intervention by GPs, a small percentage of those so advised stop smoking long-term. Nicotine replacement (gum, patches, nasal sprays) has been shown roughly to double long-term abstinence rates, compared with placebo and, therefore, to substantially enhance the effect of advice; but the perceived expensiveness of these products (which are not available on the NHS) seriously limits their use.

The book is a valuable information source for academics, health service administrators, campaigners against tobacco, and many others. Although it is unlikely to find a place on the bookshelves of many practices, the importance of tobacco in relation to health could warrant such a place; it should certainly be in all postgraduate centre and medical school libraries.

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MEDICAL EDUCATION REVIEW

D Faux, C Ball (eds)
Corbett Press, Stourbridge (1996)
Published quarterly. Price £35 per annum

It is always a pleasure to see a new journal from general practice, particularly when it comes from a College Faculty (Midlands) and

shows so much promise. This new review journal has been compiled by active GP clinicians with an interest in medical education, who found 'no way of gathering information that was relevant or current'. Readers are enticed by such titles as 'Learning Styles', 'Distance Learning for GP Tutors', 'Breaking Bad News' and 'Women Consultants'.

Review journals have the job of selecting from and distilling the vast amounts of published research but also the responsibility to do justice to the original, or the reader may emerge with false conclusions. The ultimate value of the new journal will depend on how well the editors select papers and how well the reviewers reflect the original work. The *Medical Education Review* tackles the problem of ensuring consistency of assessments in an open and constructive way, by publishing a list of criteria and a marking schedule for reviewers that is expressed in stars for importance and smiling faces for ease of reading. The layout of the new journal is reader-friendly, with a restrained but effective use of the graphic capabilities of desktop publishing.

The *Medical Education Review* is an accessible and relevant shortcut to what is going on in medical education. It provides a valuable service to all those with an interest in the subject, and deserves a place in every training practice.

ALASTAIR F WRIGHT

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RESEARCHING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN HEALTH

D Kelleher and S Hillier (eds)
Routledge, London (1996)
224 pages. Price £14.99 (pbk)
ISBN 0415111838

Copying from one author is plagiarism, but copying from more than one is research. Eleven medical sociologists have done a lot of research to write 10 chapters of this book. The Royal College of General Practitioners' triad of a patient's problems covers the physical, psychological and social dimensions. The editors have fulfilled a need in that the text concentrates on the sociological aspects of cultural differences relevant to primary care.

In the chapter 'The meanings of high blood pressure among Afro-Caribbean and white patients', Myfanwy Morgan points out, with wit and clarity, that:

- According to the 1991 Census, black Caribbeans form the second largest ethnic minority in the UK, comprising 0.9% of