

but thoroughly. There are chapters on seven anatomical areas covering the most commonly performed injections.

Unfortunately, the author is let down by sloppy editing. The first chapter is oddly entitled 'Incidence', instead of something like 'General principles'. The style is uneven, jumping from the personal to the impersonal, and one diagram appears to demonstrate the injection of 10 mls of fluid into the ischial gluteal bursa rather than 2 mls as correctly stated in the text. There are other places where sub-headings and lists would have improved the accessibility of the information.

It was disappointing to see so few references. Much of what we do in general practice is empirical, and success rates through injection techniques are probably not as great as might be thought. Despite the lack of good control trials in this area, a few pointers towards the relevant literature would have enhanced this book.

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#### MAKING SENSE OF A PRIMARY CARE HEALTH SERVICE

*Peter Littlejohns and Christina Victor (eds)  
Radcliffe Medical Press 1996  
100 pages, price £16.50  
ISBN 1857750489*

This book, according to one of its editors, 'deals with the overall concept of the policy [that of the primary care-led service] and its implementation through the eyes of the general practitioners and public health physicians...' As such, its readership will probably tend to be small, and limited to these groups. This is a pity because it does little to help the other puzzled folk who want to know where this policy is going.

In the book, a series of authors seek to explore and explain various aspects of the topic from defining the policy to the impact of the new health authorities. Many interesting and difficult subjects (for example, maintaining quality, commissioning and fundholding) get only a brief treatment. In many cases (but less so in the chapter on commissioning) the treatment tends to be theoretical and encouraging with too few real examples.

The chapter on health-needs assessment makes some interesting points and seems almost, to this reader at least, to be suggesting that health statisticians should lead the service. As a consequence, the book poses the question as to what can the GP say about local practice variations that would lead the service in non-approved statistical directions.

All in all, this is a book packed with ideas, theories and proposals, but with little by way of proof of achievement — after all, in a sense, GPs have always led the service. If, dear general practitioner, you have time to spare (and which of you does?) and can ration yourself to a steady reading and not a quick-fire rush through it, then it is worth reading — perhaps with a large container of salt by your side.

ARTHUR J WILLCOCKS

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#### MEDICAL RECORDS IN PRACTICE

*B Lervy (ed)  
RCGP Publications 1996  
Price £20.00  
ISBN 0850842247*

This publication from the Royal College of General Practitioners' Practice Organization Series aims to provide guidelines for all members of the primary health care team at a time when all National Health Service bodies have been asked to ensure that their arrangements for handling patient information conform with the Department of Health guidelines. The topics covered range from the preparation and use of medical records, both manual and computerized, to the current legal aspects including standards, confidentiality and patient access.

The chapters vary in style from a résumé of statutory requirements, and reviews of research-based recommendations, to original papers by individual practitioners. There are good expositions of the unresolved dilemmas with reference to the clinical and medico-legal aspects of manual versus computer records, but there are no fresh insights, conclusions or recommendations regarding the way forward.

The format, with its multiple contributors, makes this book more suitable as a reference volume in the practice library, where members of the practice team, including GP registrars, may benefit from reading individual sections of the text to improve or update their knowledge of current trends and guidelines for medical records in primary care.

R FAIRLEY

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