
BOOK REVIEWS

Sexual Health Matters in Primary Care. Gill Wakley & Ruth Chambers. Radcliffe 2001. £19.95 PB. Pp vi-198. ISBN No. 1-85775-414-X.

Improving Sexual Health is a 'Hot Topic' on the agenda of both the Surgeon General and the Government. This is a subject that our practice and I are particularly interested in. In fact, I had already bought the book before I was asked to review it, as it looked like a useful resource, the author having already written a large number of excellent primary care books. I have not been disappointed.

This very readable book looks at best practice in sexual health. It is crammed full of information, ideas, assessment tools and lists of up to date resources, guidelines and useful websites. It includes chapters on taking a sexual history and confidentiality, provision of contraceptive services, chlamydia and managing sexual dysfunction in primary care. Each chapter contains a review of the subject with reflection exercises and a list of references. The book is particularly written to be a resource for drawing up a personal or practice development plan in the clinical management of sexual health and, to assist this, gives easy to use templates and examples. I also feel that many aspects of the book would be useful to GP registrars, particularly those preparing for MRCGP.

If this book is anything to go by the other books in the series would be well worth reading. Of the other titles available, 'Mental Health Matters in Primary Care' and 'Musculoskeletal Matters in Primary Care' could be of particular interest to military practices.

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Evidence-based Practice in Primary Care. 2nd Edition. Edited by Chris Silagy and Andrew Haines. BMJ Books 2001. £25.00. PB. Pp vii-206. ISBN 0-7279-1568-1.

This BMJ book quickly endorses the need for evidence based medicine in General Practice and Primary Care. Its introductory chapters are easy to follow with good definitions (you can quickly pick up the jargon!). I particularly liked the "five step process for using evidence based approach in General Practice". Each step is straight-

forward to follow in outline. The text is endorsed with excellent diagrams, tables and figures.

Unfortunately the book then goes into detail about how to apply evidence-based medicine with a more detailed use of statistics. I found myself lost and often found it difficult to remember how far I had read. I suspect that the problem may well be in the subject rather than the book! The chapters are written by academic general practitioners and this may make them a little removed from the practising clinician. I tried hard to follow it, but struggled.

This book would be good to borrow and is useful for understanding the terminology in evidence based medicine. It would be particularly useful if you have to prepare a talk on the subject or have a GP Registrar wanting additional material. However, it is not a book on "Evidence-based Medicine made simple". I recommend it for "somebody else's" library, to which you have access.

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H Jones VC: The life and death of an unusual hero. John Wilsey. Hutchinson 2002. £18.99. Pp xi-335. Illust. ISBN No. 0-09-17935-6.

The reason I have written this book review for the Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps is because it portrays, in the most accurate detail, an analysis of the regimental structure of the British Army. The hero, "H" Jones, himself stirs all sorts of emotions for those who served during this period of quite wrongly perceived military inactivity. Jones, like many other cold war soldiers had to thrive when and where active service opportunities arose. He was decorated MBE following a tour in Northern Ireland as a Brigade Major and, having supported magnificently as a staff officer at HQLF at Wilton, the Commonwealth Monitoring Force in Zimbabwe, was advanced to OBE. Outstanding officers, (he was one several times), had to temper their ambition and natural verve and enthusiasm, with a degree of tolerance and lip-biting, because of the possible damning Annual Confidential Grade of "E" for "Tact and Cooperation".

"H" owned a yacht, the "Romanipel". The verve he demonstrated in sailing and motor racing was also apparent in a variety of

postings in which he was able to court adulation from those serving him, his peers and his superiors, while seriously antagonising small numbers from all these same three groups.

The fact that the book is published now on the twentieth anniversary of his death is not due to commercial expediency. Wilsey has put in a very great deal of research since he retired from the Army in 1996, in association with a very busy job, and I find it hard to imagine that publication could have been achieved any quicker. He was a contemporary of "H" in the Devon and Dorsets, but "H" was 15 months his junior in the same regiment. Wilsey was one of the three officers from that regiment who attended the Staff College in 1973. The other two were "H" and Paddy King-Fretts, who later commanded a squadron of SAS in Dhofar and was chosen to command the Devon and Dorsets following Wilsey. During the Falklands War, Wilsey was still commanding.

Having not achieved designate command of his own regiment, Jones inherited 2 Para, just back from a two year tour in Northern Ireland, at Ballykilner, on the 3rd April 1981. As an incomer he had a difficult task ahead. He had to retrain the regiment into a war-fighting, rather than peacekeeping role. He did so and some toes were trodden on in the process. The regiment would never have gone to the Falklands had it not been for his burning ambition and the friends he had made in his previous job at Wilton. He managed to get 2 Para into 3 Commando Brigade, resulting in the 3rd Battalion, the Royal Anglian Regiment being selected to replace 2 Para in a posting to Belize.

Wilsey describes the feelings, emotions and recollections of those who served at Darwin/Goose Green in a manner which is totally plausible and lacking in partisanship. He published a photographic diagram, (p244), of "H"'s dash up the re-entrant, which purports to show his target trench and his Argentinian killer, well to his right. I have some doubts over this diagram. Surgeon Commander Rick Jolly is certain that "H" was killed by a single bullet, which caused an 8 mm entry wound behind his right clavicle in the supraclavicular fossa and a much larger exit wound of his left lower abdomen, the direction of the wound track being possibly explained by a ricochet off the vertebral column. Such an entry and exit wound could not have been produced by a shot from a trench facing his back. It could, however, have been fired from the trench that "H" was attacking if he had ducked when fired at. Alternatively, he could have been hit before he turned left round the base of the re-entrant. It certainly could not have been fired, as has been suggested, by one of his own soldiers.

The conclusion of this book is that Jones inspired many, many people throughout his

life and would appear to have done so in the most dramatic fashion on the 28th May and his extraordinary actions, for a whole string of cogent reasons, fully warranted a posthumous VC.

Why should this book, written extremely well by General Sir John Wilsey, Commander in Chief, United Kingdom Land Forces, later, Land Command, 1993-1996, now Chairman of the Western Provident Association, appeal to members of the Army Medical Services?

These tales of derring-do are worth considering by all members of the AMS. It is masterly as a textbook of how the Army works, its confidential reporting system and its importance, the contacts made at Sandhurst and later Camberley, where only a few AMS officers go and the regimental system with all its intrigues and strengths. It should be compulsory reading for all young doctors, prior to PGMO courses and all aspiring Medical Support Officers, whether they be at Sandhurst, as officers in other regiments or corps or soldiers in the Army Medical Services. In my view, it beats Anthony Beevor's, acclaimed book, "Inside the British Army".

Having been John Wilsey's last substantive two-star Commander Medical, I commend it to you.

RP Craig
Major General (Rtd)

The Medics Guide to Work and Electives Around the World. Mark Wilson. Arnold Publishers. £14.99. PB. Pp864. ISBN No. 0-340-76098-2.

Part medical traveller's almanac, part idiot's guide to stepping-out abroad, the title of this rough-guide-to-a-medics-lonely-planet style book is self-explanatory. It presents a mixture of well-researched facts, patronising tips and unintentional humour.

Divided into three sections, the first of these, 'Getting Ready', has three chapters. The first of these, 'Planning Your Elective', for a supposedly educated readership, is monstrously worrying. Much of the blurb is irrelevant, however, like medical school lectures, there are occasional gems. Whilst providing useful advice on the subject of funding and locating other helpful sources of information, the author demonstrates an uncanny knack for stating the very obvious, "On the subject of danger, try to avoid war zones". This also pervades chapter two, 'Working Overseas' where you are told not to forget to pack your stethoscope. To be fair, it does give an honest, balanced assessment of the pros and cons, risks and benefits of a gap year working abroad. The final chapter, 'Your Health Whilst Abroad' improves, with good advice on common traveller's ailments and a sensible approach to a first aid kit. The feeling persists, though, that this book has

been written for GCSE students, not people who possess a degree in medicine, "If you've had your spleen removed it can be extremely dangerous to go to countries where pneumococcus or malaria are common".

The criticism must cease for Section 2, 'Destinations'. Broken down into continents and island groups, it gives a brief, accurate description of the highlights (both tourist and medical) of more than 100 countries, with comprehensive listings of each area's hospitals, including areas of specialisation and the social scene. It also details the visas and permits required, whom to write to and how soon in advance.

The appendix is an excellent list of elective travel bursaries, embassies around the world and travel vaccinations.

My impression is that once you have written down the email addresses you require for the area you plan to visit, the details on other countries become academic (unless you are planning to locum around the world). I think this book would be a welcome addition to any medical library, but is too generalised and simplistic to rush out and buy.

In summary this book is a non-essential luxury travel item, but merits a look if planning work abroad.

Capt Neil Hill RAMC

A Surgeon in France. The Memoirs of George E Gask CMG DSO FRCS, 1914-1919. With biographical notes by his son Dr John Gask. Liskeard Books. 2002. Illust. Pp 148. ISBN No. 1901103013.

This book is based on the diaries kept by George Gask during his service as a military surgeon during World War 1. Born in January 1875 Gask qualified at the early age of 23 and began a steady rise to become, by the outbreak of war, a respected and successful surgeon. When war broke out he was climbing in the Italian Alps and being a Captain in the Territorial Force, made his way home by a long and circuitous route, and on his arrival found his mobilisation papers awaiting him. His unit was 1st London General Hospital based in Camberwell.

For the next 18 months Gask juggled with working at Camberwell and various other military hospitals and his ever-increasing private practice. Many of Gask's senior clinicians joined the army including Sir Arthur Bowlby and D'Arcy Power; their paths would cross throughout his wartime service. Throughout this account Gask does not mince his words, especially with regard to officers of the RAMC, many who he regarded as weak, and those who he felt could not stand the strain of command.

It is from 1916 that the book really becomes interesting as it recounts the various CCS and hospitals in which Gask worked in

Flanders, especially 38 CCS at Heilly. Not content to use tried and tested methods of wound treatment, Gask initially wanted to set up a chest unit and start to open up gunshot wounds of the chest. This work was eventually mentioned in the Official Medical History of WW1. His other innovation was the early treatment of wounds involving excision and closure, rather than leaving them to suppurate. His expertise was eventually recognised in 1917, by his appointment as Consulting Surgeon to Fourth Army and the book goes on to recount his travels around the various medical units he had responsibility for.

Gask outlines his early experiences of blood transfusion with No 2 Canadian CCS and informs readers how dramatically was the change after the infusion of blood.

The final pages of the book are given over to various biographical notes, summaries of the rest of his working life and his retirement and also his recreations. There is a final appendix of biographical notes of the various senior surgeons mentioned in the book.

A Surgeon in France is a very pleasant and interesting read and should appeal to both the general military historian and those with clinical a interest.

PH Starling
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ABC of Clinical Genetics 3rd Edition. Helen M Kingston. BMJ £17.95. PB. Pp v-120. £17.95. ISBN No. 0-7279-1627-0.

Again another successful and useful publication by BMJ publication covering all aspects of clinical genetics, albeit in a condensed presentation.

The basic science of genetics is covered, including the structure of DNA and chromosomal analysis. Clinicians, especially paediatricians, are well served with the scientific explanation for Mendelian inheritance both usual and unusual, the risk estimation of genetic disorders and carrier detection. There are useful, though condensed, chapters on common clinical disorders and the scientific explanation for these disorders. The clinicians, especially paediatricians, will find the chapters on genetic assessment, genetic counselling, prenatal diagnosis and dysmorphology very useful. Recent advances in Genetics such as gene mapping, gene therapy and genetics of cancer are discussed.

In short, this book, which covers over 100 pages, is very useful for paediatricians and other clinicians, for understanding the basics of genetics and its clinical application and should be available in all medical set-ups which care for children.

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