
BOOK REVIEWS

ABC of Psychological Medicine. Edited by Richard Mayou, Michael Sharpe and Alan Carson. BMJ Books 2003. £16.95. PB. Pp vi – 57. ISBN 0-7279-1556-8.

This book is the latest of ABC Books from the BMJ and consolidates a series of articles that have already been published. This is a “busy” book full of small writing and numerous boxes. It is not a quick read.

The introduction highlights the importance of psychological and behavioural factors in most illnesses. The authors are a little sceptical about General Practitioners ability to recognise these conditions and recommend commencing medication or referring patients onto Psychiatric nurses or Psychiatrists at an early stage.

The first chapter greatly complicates the “Consultation”. It is a shame that the authors do not use the Pendleton model of the consultation, as this would have been easier to follow, and is already known to all General Practitioners.

Subsequent chapters cover the psychological aspects of many illnesses including cancer, fatigue and chest pain. I found it useful to dip into the book when I came across conditions in which I had a particular interest or wanted more information. The chapter on the psychological response to trauma is of particular interest. If the reader is only going to read one chapter this is the most useful.

Perhaps this book has made me look for more psychological factors in every illness presented. Unless these factors are addressed, patients are unlikely to be able to recognise important psychological elements of their condition. Furthermore, perhaps I should put psychological conditions further up my list of differential diagnoses in each patient.

In summary, I found this an old fashioned text book that was not particularly useful for a busy General Practitioner. It is worth browsing through. At best I recommend it for selective reading, as long as it is in somebody else’s library.

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Ophthalmology Fact Fixer. Chung Nen Chua, Li Wern Voon and Siddhartha Goel. Radcliffe 2002. £17.95. PB. Pp iii – 142. ISBN 1-85775-908-7.

This text aims to provide concise and up to date coverage of the ophthalmology syllabus, and will prove a useful revision aid for those undertaking postgraduate examinations in the specialty. It is laid out as a series of 240 multiple choice questions, with explanatory evidence based answers over the page. There are helpful summary boxes outlining salient points for the more commonly asked questions, and the text also gives summaries of recent clinical trials that may be important on the examination circuit.

While useful for the ophthalmology trainee, this text is probably too specialised for the generalist who wants a quick update on common eye problems presenting either to the general practitioner or emergency department. Having said that, the book sits proudly on top of my bathroom pile, and I certainly know more about ophthalmology now than before I opened its pages.

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The Study Guide for General Practice Training. Tim Swanwick and Nav Chana. Radcliffe Professional Developments 2003. £19.95. ISBN 1-85775-832-3.

The recently published Study Guide to General Practice is a useful addition to the wide range of books available to assist general practitioner registrars. So how is it different? The main difference is a series of topic questions, or areas, that guide the GP Registrar (GPR) in his or her learning. For example “Woman’s Health”. There is a list of what the average GPR should know about at the end of training - able to take a competent gynaecological history or describing the management plan for a termination of pregnancy, as just two. What it then goes on to outline is how the knowledge and skills can be developed either by attending courses, gaining skills in the surgery, or alternatively using books or on-line resources. Subjects covered are wide

ranging and cover 22 topic areas - psychosocial disease, through ENT to ethics. So would I recommend that all GPR go out and buy it? The book is a useful guide to learning, but a competent GP trainer would be able to guide and input far more. The bottom line would be that if you have a good trainer who is looking with you at your learning needs, there are better ways to spend £20.

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Supervision and Support in Primary Care. Jonathan Burton and John Launer. Radcliffe Professional Development 2003. £24.95. PB. Pp v – 164. ISBN 1-85775-951-6.

I picked up the book 'Supervision and Support in Primary Care' hoping to find a few answers to some of the current supervisory problems in the Defence Medical Services, but I was very disappointed. The book gives a good overview on the "who" and the "what" of supervision but gives little new on "why". In particular it provides the reader with information on the various types or models used (mentorship, Balint and others) within the medical, nursing and allied professions and gives guidance on how to be both supervised and the supervisor. It is well written and brings together strands from many sources into one book, but it fails to move the debate on "why supervise" forward - this is as much an issue within the NHS as it is the Defence Medical Services.

So is the book for you? If you want a good summary of the types and models of educational supervision commonly used, it is a useful resource. Otherwise I would read the texts from which the book gains most of its information.

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Primary Care Training and Development. Lyn Talbot and Denise Pora. Radcliffe Primary Care. 2003. £21.95. PB. Pp vi – 140. ISBN 1-85775-909-5.

Virtually all health professionals have involvement in appraisal, either in terms of their own reports or because they have a responsibility to undertake appraisals on colleagues. The book Primary Care Training and Development is in essence a personnel manager's guide to appraisal. It is well written and gives excellent guidelines on how to appraise and managerially assess colleagues. It also gives some very useful

templates for building job descriptions, as well as looking at how to write training and development plans, both for individuals and practices. Whilst some of the information is given on managerial courses (such as the civil service training days), Primary Care Training and Development is recommended to those who have a responsibility to assess and appraise colleagues, and also if you are wanting to develop a practice development plan.

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Handbook of Postoperative Complications. DJ Leaper and ALG Peel. Oxford University Press 2003. £22.50. ISBN NO. 0-19-263070-9.

This book on postoperative complications is described as a handbook but gives a comprehensive review of the problems and pitfalls that can occur following surgery and some of the measures that can be taken to minimise or avoid them. The first part of the book deals with the general complications of surgery with chapters on infective complications, venous thromboembolism and fluid balance. There is a useful chapter for surgeons on complications related to anaesthetics and intensive care. Part two focuses on complications following specific types of surgery and includes interventional radiology, orthopaedics and gynaecological surgery. At the end of the book there is a useful chapter on medico-legal aspects of complications including a section on consent and guidance for the expert witness.

In the preface the editors outline the importance of documenting, auditing and discussing postoperative complications so that lessons can be learned and processes and guidelines reviewed. This is something we must all be involved in as part of the process of clinical governance.

This book has been aimed at undergraduates and those in basic surgical training, as well as theatre and recovery staff, but higher trainees and consultants will find it useful to have a copy on the ward or in their office.

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Diving and Subaquatic Medicine 4th Edition. Arnold 2002. C Edmonds, CJ Lowry, J Pennefather and R Walker. £85.00. Pp448. ISBN No. 0340 80630.

The 79 diverse chapters of the latest edition represent the state of the publishers', as well as the authors', art and are correspondingly easy to read and understand. Case histories

and examples illustrate key points throughout the book; and the full range of diving disorders exhibited by amateur and professional divers is concisely, but thoroughly discussed by well respected authorities. The senior author (Edmonds) testifies to the effects of the ageing process on his knowledge, but not his wisdom, in the chapter on 'Age and diving'; the junior author (Walker) as a former Officer-in-Charge of the RAN School of Underwater Medicine in Sydney contributes valuable new chapters on decompression sickness, medical standards and submarine medicine – the latter emphasizing the superiority of the Australian Submarine Escape and Rescue systems over their US and UK counterparts. As an integrated, accurate and (in places) amusing text it is unsurpassed.

In spite of the Australian emphasis of much of the book's contents there has been worldwide acceptance of earlier editions, and the present one unquestionably deserves its place as a recommended text on the RN Standard Underwater Medicine (SUM) Course at Alverstoke. There is room for controversy, such as the senior author's views on asthmatics and diving in the appropriate chapter (the BSAC Medical Committee takes a more permissive line, although the British Service Diving Standards for Adventurous Training do not) and there are excellent chapters on cardiac stress factors in diving, and the ear and diving.

With the ever increasing numbers of Army personnel diving professionally, for adventurous training and for recreation,

most RAMC doctors will come across an intending or practising diver at some stage in their career, and ideally a copy of this 4th Edition should be on the bookshelf of every AMS medical centre.

The chapters on trauma and poisonings from marine creatures are probably the best accounts available at present; as the lecturer on these subjects for the SUM course this reviewer unhesitatingly commends them to leaders of Service expeditions involving diving or swimming.

The Chapters on technical diving provide a clear and unambiguous update on a fast-growing area, and those on cardiac disease, diabetes and the particular problems of the handicapped diver are especially useful for the doctor who advises divers from outwith the Service community. Some may feel the price of this latest edition to be a little high; nevertheless it is rare to find the wealth of cross-referenced decompression tables and other technical information in a book of this size. Perhaps in the fullness of time the publisher will consider a CD/DVD version for military medical centres of the future, ashore and afloat, where the first steps in the management of medical problems associated with diving necessarily take place. It is also heartening to see, on page 163, that a Great Barrier Reef accident dating from 1977 (which professionally involved the reviewer), where shallow water oxygen recompression therapy was used successfully on a severely bent diver on the wreck of HMS Pandora, still has teaching value.

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