

Essential Management of Obstetric Emergencies (3rd edn)

Thomas F Baskett
Clinical Press 1999
Price £17.50. Pp 281
ISBN 1 85457 042 0

The third edition of this enlightened text has adopted the theme of evidence-based medicine applied to obstetric practice in the emergency situation. This is a laudable aim, as the number of randomized controlled trials governing treatment of obstetrical emergencies are few and far between. Nonetheless, the author has gone to considerable lengths to provide a clear and substantive text on various obstetric emergencies, with a well referenced bibliography at the end of each chapter.

The reader will benefit from the great experience that Professor Baskett has applied to the content of the manuscript and the book would be a valuable addition to the reading of any trainee in obstetrics and gynaecology.
Roy Farquharson, Liverpool Women's Hospital

Intensive Care Medicine

Edited by J Bion
BMJ Publishing Group 1999
Price £45.00. Pp 438
ISBN 0 7279 1076 0

Intensive Care Medicine is the first book to be published in the series 'Fundamentals of Anaesthesia and Acute Medicine'. It comprises 32 articles on various aspects of critical care written by European authorities. While it is aimed at trainees in intensive care and anaesthesia, it would be useful for anyone in a hospital speciality who cares for critically ill patients.

The volume itself is relatively compact and split into three basic sections. The first part deals with the history of intensive care, scoring systems and legal or ethical issues. Part two is devoted to the pathogenesis of critical illness, with chapters on multiple organ failure,

microvascular control and function, tissue hypoxia and the inflammatory response in sepsis.

The bulk of the book, however, consists of chapters written on the management of individual clinical problems. Although some of these are divided up into the care of individual organ systems, others are concerned with care of the whole patient in a particular clinical scenario. Thus chapters on cardiovascular, renal and hepatic failure are included along with ones on organ donation, antimediator therapies, transport of the critically ill patient and major disasters.

Apart from the price, the only reservation about this book (which is fully acknowledged in the preface) is that it fails to be comprehensive. However, each chapter is well referenced and, given the limitations of space, *Intensive Care Medicine* offers a sound introduction to the theory and practice of critical care.

R Stephens/M Mythen, UCL Hospitals, London

The Medical Manager: a Practical Guide for Clinicians

A Young
BMJ Publishing Group 1999
Price £25.00. Pp 289
ISBN 0 7279 1376 X

Of pragmatism, William James once said '...we have to live today by what truth we can get today, and be ready tomorrow to call it falsehood'. It can be argued that effective management, whatever its style, has at its core a constant pursuit of pragmatism: management is nothing if it cannot deliver its aims. James' aphorism also sets out one of management's most unforgiving features: by definition it makes obsolete what it changes.

Anthony Young's book cannot avoid this pitfall. Its title makes its aim clear, and the pace of change in the NHS makes it at least in part outmoded by its publication date. However, the title is slightly misleading, since its most effective

elements are those which are more concerned with the relationship between management and the clinical professions and how it can be improved.

The book has a helpful structure. It starts and finishes at a more philosophical level, considering how doctors think about management as part of their own careers, before moving on to discuss how medical management works in reality. Only then does the book discuss the structure, funding and policy framework of the NHS. This order is helpful since this last part is traditionally the bit most doctors new to the field equate with management, but which those more experienced recognize as having much less to do with the reality of an NHS organization.

The key to the book lies in its opening sentences. The author makes clear that it is a personal reflection of 8 years in medical management. Since he works at Guy's Hospital, these years can be seen as some of the most crowded in the history of the NHS. Those chapters where he relaxes into his own reflections are the most interesting, providing a fascinating perspective of a complex organization in the eye of a storm of change. The least helpful sections — for this reader at least — are those which set out to explain the structure and policy framework of the NHS, and their operational effects. It is those which are of course quickest outdated, and in fact most of them are already — with some of the language almost jarringly so.

Whether you buy this book will depend on what you want from it. If you want a text on how to be a medical manager, it will provide at best a partial answer, and one which dates quickly. If, however, you want a fascinating and beautifully written insight into almost a decade at the heart of an organization seen as the flagship of the now vanished Tory reforms, this book is for you.

Alastair Scotland, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, London

Primary Care Rheumatology

John H Klippel, Paul A Dieppe, Fred F Ferri
Mosby 1999
Price £39.95. Pp 364
ISBN 0 7234 3143 4

Every general practice surgery should have this book. It is an essential and practical guide on the diagnosis and management of musculoskeletal disorders for primary care physicians. It is a large book packed with photographs, tables and algorithms that are of excellent quality and easy to follow. All information is up to date and very user friendly.

This book is extremely comprehensive but all information is definitely approached from the general practitioners' point of view. It guides one through the key points of the history and examination, tests and finally to diagnosis and management.

I was very impressed by the self-help appendix with pages which can be photocopied for the patient to take



away with references for them on where they can find out more about their condition. They even listed self-help groups in the UK with e-mail addresses and websites.

I also liked the colour coding of the tables so that one could follow one's way round the book with ease. As a consultant rheumatologist it was nice to see the recommendations for referral for each of the systemic disorders.

An excellent comprehensive but very user-friendly rheumatology textbook which will be suitable for all general practitioners, accident and emergency departments and for those in other general medical specialties with an interest in musculoskeletal disorders. I expect it will also be a major reference book for the rheumatology nurse specialists and senior house officers.

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