

ABC of Palliative Care

Edited by Marie Fallon and Bill O'Neill
BMJ Publishing Group 1998
Price £14.95. Pp 68
ISBN 0 7279 0793 X

The BMJ's *ABC of Palliative Care* provides a comprehensive summary of the essentials of palliative care, ranging from pain control to care in the community. It has been produced in an accessible format, with short easy-to-read chapters and lots of summary boxes and illustrations.

As with any multi-author book there is a fair amount of variation in the quality of the different chapters. I found two in particular disappointing. The chapter on difficult pain problems does not, I feel, succeed in giving a balanced view of the various options open to the specialist confronted with these patients. Most of the essential information is present but is not conveyed in a particularly helpful way. The chapter on the last 48 hours lacks focus and does not provide a real appreciation of the practical actions necessary when the patient is very close to death. Again the information is there but not communicated effectively.

Despite these reservations, this book deserves a wide readership. Its particular attraction lies in its 'user friendly' format, making it simple for any doctor to access practical advice on the management of the physical, social and psychological problems experienced by terminally ill patients. I would strongly recommend it to all GPs, hospital doctors and specialist nurses involved in the care of patients with advanced illness, not just cancer.
Anna Kurowska, Whittington Hospital, London

Atlas of Breast Imaging

Marla K Jones
Blackwell Science 1998
Price £72.50. Pp 250
ISBN 0 632 04303 2

This is a comprehensive pictorial atlas of imaging of breast diseases. The large chapter on mammography is successfully divided into sections by mammographic sign where cases are used to illustrate the radiological finding. When ultrasound and magnetic resonance (MR) imaging have been used these are also included giving a good overview of all three modalities. Details of the use of breast ultrasound, techniques and equipment involved, and the relevance of colour flow Doppler in the breast are an omission which

I presume is a result of this case by case presentation. Similarly, there are no descriptions of mammographic or MR technique.

The mammographic reproduction is of a high standard and the display of images over time to show comparison with previous films is particularly useful, especially for those involved in breast screening. There is a detailed chapter on the postoperative breast with well annotated MR images as well as all the relevant mammographic appearances. Breast biopsy, needle localization and galactography are well described with step-by-step pictorial guides to each procedure.

It is a little frustrating for the British reader that the chapter devoted to breast screening is based almost entirely on American data and guidelines which are different to those in the UK. This national difference is also seen in the large and elegant section devoted to pneumocystography; a technique only rarely used in the UK.

Overall this is a useful atlas especially for radiologists in training or those new to breast imaging.
ERE Denton, King's Healthcare NHS Trust, London

Stroke Units: an evidence based approach

Edited by Peter Langhorne and Martin Dennis
BMJ Publishing Group 1998
Price £25.00. Pp 112
ISBN 0 7279 1211 9

This modest volume of 112 pages presents the evidence supporting the case for stroke units and explores the implications of this evidence for planning stroke services and further research. Despite the size of this extremely readable and well structured book the authors manage to pack in vast amounts of relevant and useful information, discussing issues such as the evaluation of evidence, systematic reviews and cost benefit analysis, and providing a useful glossary of terms.

It is an exemplary test and one which should be prescribed reading (if that does not put people off) for all medical students and beyond. It acknowledges, however, that despite a strong case being made for stroke units, it is difficult to use this evidence to guide one's service development. This may relate to the fact that the essential components of the unit which provide the benefit have yet to be identified. The authors discuss outstanding research questions in the final chapter, perhaps only omitting one: the key components

of the rehabilitation process. For a relatively painless and brief read one's level of education is significantly raised — and all for £25.

Alan J Thompson, Institute of Neurology, London

ABC of Transfusion (3rd edn)

Edited by Marcela Contreras
BMJ Publishing Group 1998
Price £15.95. Pp 81
ISBN 0 7279 1209 7

The *ABC of Transfusion* continues this excellent series of BMJ publications. Although this 3rd edition appears 6 years after its predecessor, which was published 2 years after the 1st edition, its publication is timely. It is entirely up-to-date and reflects the recent concern over the safety of UK blood products. Many of us, and the public in general, have great faith in the products and record of the United Kingdom Blood Transfusion Service.

The format of this booklet follows the original formula, with the chapters providing a selection of topics which are very appropriate and cover all the important technical and clinical aspects of current blood transfusion practice. It does so with great clarity, good illustrations and photographs, although some are repeated and one (Fig 5.2) which looks highly suspicious of having been taken in the operating theatre rather than in the ward! There are good bullet points and it is well-indexed. The impact of new variant Creutzfeld-Jakob disease crops up several times, without there being any evidence proving that blood products have caused these cases. Nonetheless, the spin off from this uncertainty and the use of universal leucodepletion, will be felt by all. By April 2000 the cost of a unit of blood will be close to £100. This will undoubtedly instigate greater awareness of blood usage and conservation of blood stocks. Changes in surgical, particularly elective vascular practice, have already demonstrated a considerable reduction in demand. Just to pick out one chapter, autologous transfusion, whether it be preoperative donation, intraoperative or red cell salvage, will assume increasing emphasis and could now prove cost-effective; it is well-covered in this chapter.

This excellent book will appeal to medical students, nurses and haematologists, and not just those in training. The references are current, and it is good value. Highly recommended.

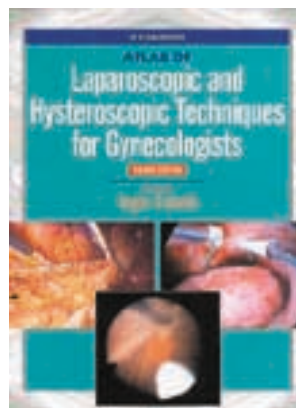
J Parker-Williams, St George's Hospital, London

Atlas of Laparoscopic and Hysteroscopic Techniques for Gynaecologists (2nd edn)

Edited by Togas Tulandi
WB Saunders 1998
Price £65.00 Pp 262
ISBN 0 7020 2294 2

This is the second edition of a well regarded multiauthor text, representing a useful reference work for both trainee and more experienced endoscopic gynaecological surgeons. The list of contributors includes some of the most respected surgeons in North America and Europe.

This edition includes additional chapters on laparoscopy in pregnancy, radical hysterectomy and endoscopic fetal surgery as well as a new section on operative hysteroscopy. The text is well written and simple to understand. The editor is a clear thinking and



respected teacher and has clearly had a tight editorial control over the contributors' text. Overall he has achieved his stated aim of assembling a practical, step-by-step guide to performing a range of gynaecological interventions by endoscopic surgery.

My only criticism of this book is that the layout and style is a little old-fashioned. This feeling is compounded by the liberal use of pencil sketches which, while technically competent and satisfactorily illustrating the surgical steps involved, do look as if they belong in a text from the beginning of the 20th century rather than the end.

WB Saunders would do well to study some of the more imaginative British publishers who are producing texts of a much more modern style while still maintaining the didactic approach which this volume does so well.

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