

Bronchial Asthma: principles of diagnosis and treatment (4th edn)

Edited by M Eric Gershwin, Timothy A Albertson

Humana Press 2001

Price \$125. Pp 476

ISBN 0 896 03861 0

This comprehensive book is aimed at primary care physicians. There are four subsections: definitions and host responses to bronchospasm, patient management, special clinical problems, and living with asthma. Each section is subdivided further into chapters that are preceded by key learning points. The section on management has two important chapters for primary care outlining the approach to diagnosis and differential diagnosis in both childhood and adult patients. Thereafter there are some quirkier aspects to the book.

The contributors are all from California and are not well known in the UK. Some parts of the book reflect this West coast bias – the suggestion of immunotherapy desensitization in children and the sympathetic approach to the use of complementary medicines does not sit comfortably with UK asthma management guidelines.

Notwithstanding the authors have considered a number of areas of asthma care often avoided by physicians but of increasing interest to patients. These include a very detailed chapter on alternative therapies which I found educational in itself, chapters dealing with food additives, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, recreational drug abuse and the law and asthma. This patient-centred focus is to be commended.

Other chapters detail aspects of care related to pregnancy, exercise and occupation. There is an additional chapter referring to self management programmes. It is more difficult to see the relevance of including a whole chapter on anaesthesia and asthma – this is directed towards general anaesthesia which is unlikely to be practised within

primary care. Similarly the chapter entitled bronchopulmonary aspergillosis appears to command more attention than relevant to the intended readership. An interesting book with aspects of care that should be more fully covered in UK texts, but expensive and not wholly relevant to a UK audience.

CM Roberts, Whipps Cross University Hospital, London

In Two Minds: A Casebook of Psychiatric Ethics

Donna Dickenson, Bill Fulford

Oxford University Press 2000

Price £27.50. Pp 382

ISBN 0 19 262858 5

Medical ethics is fascinating, but for those unfamiliar with the language it is difficult to penetrate. That is until this book. Divided into four sections, the core of the book is real case discussions. The introduction provides the reader with the basics in an easy but non-patronising manner. The final sections cover teaching and research with practical advice, give an international perspective and discuss the importance of psychiatry in bioethics.

The book has an easy-to-follow structure. Grouped in six themes, the authors start by presenting each chapter generically. A synopsis and a list of key points prepare the reader to follow the presentations and the discussion around them. Finally, each case is commented upon by a practitioner working in the field.

The book's quality was also revealed when I found myself regressing and formulating new questions. The thought of going through the references is exhausting, but the authors provide a comprehensive reading guide at the end of each chapter.

The nature of the cases (i.e. genetic testing, confidentiality) means that this book addresses the needs of all medical specialities and disciplines.

In Two Minds is presented as the sister companion to *Psychiatric Ethics*, which, in its third edition, is a classic in the field. Except for the illustrative car-

toons, it is a great book. One to have and read when real dilemmas present and when thought stimulation is sought.

I Agell, St Luke's Hospital, Huddersfield

Preoperative Assessment

Edited by Jeremy N Cashman

BMJ Publishing Group 2001

Price £27.50. Pp 195

ISBN 0727914790

The role of the anaesthetist in the UK is changing considerably in several ways, one of which is the role of the physician in perioperative care. For instance in France, the anaesthetist manages all the pre- and postoperative care as well as being responsible for the anaesthetic. In some countries several departments of anaesthesia have changed their names to incorporate the words 'perioperative medicine'.

The first four chapters of this book concern the purposes and mechanisms of the preoperative visit. Then comes a succinct and useful chapter on risk assessment, which is followed by four chapters about how patients presenting for anaesthesia and surgery should be prepared. The latter includes a chapter on patient consent (largely relating to practice in England and Wales).

This is a readable book and is illustrated with tables and the 'box' emphasis system to summarize main points. The contributors take the reader through the nature and purpose of the preoperative visit, the relevant history and examination of the patient and most importantly the importance (or not) of biochemical, haematological and special investigations. The implications of intercurrent disease are also briefly considered. This book should appeal to new entrants to anaesthesia and can be highly recommended. Many will want to find out more about specific points mentioned and are aided in this by a list of references following each chapter.

Anthony P Adams, Guy's Hospital, London

Management of Dementia

Simon Lovestone, Serge Gauthier
Martin Dunitz 2001
Price £24.95. Pp 168
ISBN 1 85317 739 3

In the present climate of optimism about the treatment of Alzheimer's disease, this book meets the need for more knowledge and information about this distressing illness.

The two authors have been involved in both research and clinical practice. This book will meet the needs of the clinicians who 'practice evidence based medicine without losing sight of the person they are caring for'.

The availability of antedementia drugs has created a new subject, described by the authors as 'dementia-ology' – 'dementia-ologists' are from many disciplines. This concise book will be a solid foundation for newer dementia-ologists and will also help experienced professionals to revise their knowledge. The book has a detailed list of references, and carers will also benefit from this easy-to-read book.

The authors have dealt with some problematic areas which clinicians face every day, like whether a diagnosis of dementia should be discussed with the patient, and how much to tell carers and when. A major concern of relatives is of they themselves developing a dementing illness. The authors have reviewed the genetic literature and provided suggestions about what to say to anxious relatives.

Carers find the non-cognitive behavioural problems of patients most troublesome. The pharmacological and non-pharmacological management of these problems are adequately discussed in this book. They have summarized the development of the antedementia drugs and discussed the limitations of the acetylcholinesterase inhibitors.

They have also discussed the molecular pathology of Alzheimer's disease, which is the basis of treatment of this disease. They have discussed their vision of the future treatments for dementia – attacking amyloid and tau proteins, and give a brief overview of what has been achieved already.

The financial, political and ethical problems of the long-term management

of dementia patients have also been mentioned. There is a need to learn from the experiences of other countries.

The book is an easy read and the tables and figures are very useful. Although not large the book is informative, thought provoking, intellectually stimulating and at times quite provocative.

Waheed Nabi, Rotherham General Hospital

Infection and Pregnancy

Edited by Allan Maclean, Lesley Regan, David Carrington
RCOG Press 2001
Price £48.00. Pp 394
ISBN 1 9003 6444 1

This text is the distillate of expert knowledge produced after a Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists study group. It brings together multidisciplinary reviews and comments of experts in various fields of reproductive and infectious health science.

There are some general introductory chapters which are an interesting introduction to the subject but very soon into the book, the working party focuses down on specific problems as diverse as congenital viral infections such as human parvovirus, group B streptococcus bacterial vaginosis and infection and caesarean section.

Each chapter is set out in a readable way with a review of the literature performed by a contemporary expert. The round table discussions at the end of each subject are particularly interesting as they outline areas of controversy or where there is no clear evidence.

There are numerous tables in the text but if I were to raise a criticism, it is the paucity of figures that break up the text.

At the end of this book there are recommendations arising from the 40th study group of Infection and Pregnancy. There are also recommendations for future research and for education of health policy.

Overall this is a contemporary and comprehensive review of the literature on infections and pregnancy. One may debate whether or not it is of general enough base to be attractive to individuals but certainly every department of

obstetrics and gynaecology in the country should own a copy.

Mark Kilby, Birmingham Women's Hospital

Surgical Oncology: multidisciplinary approach to difficult problems

Edited by Howard Silberman and Alan W Silberman
Arnold Publishers 2001
Price £155. Pp 788
ISBN 0 340 76242 X

Surgery is still the most important treatment modality in cancer therapy but its success depends on, and is enhanced by, non-surgical medical interventions. Delivery of cancer therapy has moved from a sequential independent specialist approach to a compartmentalized, anatomically-oriented sub-specialty approach, in which each individual works as part of a combined team. It is from this multidisciplinary approach to cancer therapy that Howard and Alan Silberman have edited this book.

The 32 chapters cover topical areas of cancer management ranging from molecular biology to recent developments in interventional radiology. The topics are very relevant and include chapters on controversial areas of surgical oncology such as laparoscopic resection and organ transplantation for malignancy. Another innovative aspect of this book is that each chapter is followed by a commentary, written by an expert in the field, providing a different perspective of the subject. This commentary is then followed by recent abstracts selected by the editors. The combination of a chapter, a commentary and selected abstracts, provides the reader with a review and an overview of the most recent advances in each of the topics that are considered.

This book does not strive to be an exhaustive textbook on surgical oncology, but one that highlights in great depth topical areas in this field. Its pragmatic approach makes it a useful reference book not only for general surgeons but also for any practicing clinician who is directly involved in multidisciplinary cancer treatment.

Michael Douek, Royal Free and University College Medical School, London