Communicating with Dying People and Their Relatives, by J. Lugton. Pp. xi-105. Austen Cornish Publishers in assoc. with The Lisa Sainsbury Foundation, London, 1987. £6.50.

It is now generally accepted and understood that meticulous titration of medication is essential for good palliative care of a patient who is dying. Equally important, is the meticulous 'titration' of communication between the professionals and the patient and his family, which can have as dramatic effect as medication.

This book is studded with many 'gems' and will help professionals in the difficult area of communication. For example, how recognizable, but perhaps not always acknowledged that 'it cannot be assumed an elderly person will more readily accept the prospect of death than someone younger'.

It is perhaps stating the obvious that each person only dies once. Therefore as professionals we only have one opportunity, perhaps over the course of weeks, to get the communication right. There is no chance for a trial run!

Many of these tricky areas are covered by this book. One chapter includes a discussion on the creation of time and space for communication, and the process of and necessity for an inter-disciplinary teamwork approach. Some other topics described include 'breaking bad news', the preparation of relatives for bereavement, making communication more effective and breaking down barriers.

Each of the nine chapters concludes with a number of questions and exercises which provide a stimulating learning tool. Although written primarily for nurses, this book would be of great value to doctors who, particularly in a hospital situation, usually bear the brunt of this often difficult area of care.

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100 Data Interpretation Questions for the MRCP, Second edition, edited by M.D. Flynn, R.F.U. Ashford & P.J.J.W. Venables. Pp. xi+220, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1987. £6.95.

This is the second edition of a popular book first published in 1979 and now revised, with additional questions. It consists of ten papers in the format of part II of the MRCP examination. Each paper has two ECGs (well produced) and eight questions. There are no echocardiograms. The questions are posed on the odd numbered pages with answers on the reverse. The answer pages do not confine themselves to a simple statement of the correct answer but also have brief and very helpful explanatory notes. Clues in the questions can be quite subtle... 'A 47 year old female flower seller is admitted in late October with dark urine, pyrexia and an early diastolic murmur'. Normal ranges are given, but serum calciums appear not to be corrected. In reality, clinical problems are not approached in this way, but given that

success in part II of the MRCP depends upon the ability to make diagnoses on the basis of a brief history, virtually no examination details and the interpretation of laboratory data presented in a rather arbitrary way, then this small book is ideal and is thoroughly recommended.

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Diagnostic Picture Tests in General Surgery, by W. Walker. Pp. 128, illustrated. Wolfe Medical Publications, London, 1987. £6.50.

Modern surgical problems focus increasingly on the statistics and methodology of treatment comparisons and the accuracy of various diagnostic tools. Even physical signs are often tenuously present, or no longer reliable. It is refreshing to see a book concerned with the particular surgical province of recognition of gross pathology and management implications. Mr Walker's collection of 200 photographs and X-rays is very well reproduced and accompanied by thoughtful questions and riders. There is no particular order, as befits the title, and the book amply fulfils the author's modest claim to 'refresh the memory of a clinician'.

The enjoyment of browsing through the surgical 'smorgasbord' is marred by the practise of presenting solitary barium films, some even after previous gastric surgery. Too often the lesion is either invisible or unconvincing. If the book is to be a serious aid to young surgeons with Fellowship examinations in mind, then it is teaching slightly reprehensible habits. Perhaps another edition might include some endoscopic appearances of the same lesions? Likewise I wonder if everyone in Dundee with visible piles gets a barium enema? The miserable tongue and mouth in the surgical ward may well yield monilia, but the primary diagnosis is perhaps Stevens Johnson type ulceration.

Many of us will nevertheless be grateful for the opportunity to see this collection which fits the pocket in both senses. It is excellent refreshment for all surgical ages, and a worthwhile addition to that little row of books in sister's office or the theatre coffee room.

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Melanoma and Naevi - Incidence, Interrelationships and Implications, edited by J.M. Elwood. Pp. 156, illustrated. Karger, Basle, Munich, Paris, London, New York, New Delhi, Singapore, Tokyo, Sydney, 1988. £56.90.

This slim monograph of 156 pages consists of eleven chapters, with coloured plates and black and white photographs. The authors are clinical dermatologists, epidemiologists, pathologists, geneticists and community

medicine specialists from Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA. The editor, Dr J. Mark Elwood, must be congratulated on producing a volume which makes fascinating, informative, and easy reading, with such heterogeneous authorship.

Professor Rona MacKie contributes two chapters and states that the incidence of malignant melanoma has doubled in some countries in the past ten years, making malignant melanoma the most rapidly increasing malignancy after lung cancer in women; also of special interest to practising clinicians is the chapter by Professor Thomas Fitzpatrick and his team from Harvard on the identification of those at risk and the detection of precursor lesions in early melanomas. His diagnostic acronym Asymmetry, Border, Colour, Diameter, Elevation, adorns the front cover of the book.

Other chapters explore causation and pathogenesis, ethnic origin, exposure to sunlight, and important host factors such as benign and dysplastic naevi.

Melanoma and Naevi is compulsory and compulsive reading for all dermatologists, oncologists, and plastic surgeons, though the price may inhibit individual purchase.

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1200 Multiple Choice Questions in Pharmacology, Second edition, edited by R.W. Foster. Pp. ix + 177, illustrated. Butterworths, London, Durban, Singapore, Sydney, Toronto, Wellington, 1986. £6.95.

The object of this book is to provide a source of ready made questions for use by examiners and to enable them to construct new questions. It also aims to provide candidates with practice for multiple choice examinations and to assess their own progress in learning pharmacology. All nine of the most commonly presented question forms and their general rubrics are demonstrated. The questions cover a wide range of topics in both the pre-clinical and clinical pharmacology syllabus although the use of this book will encourage students to maintain their knowledge of basic pharmacology until the final medical examination. The questions are mainly up-to-date involving current therapy and usage. This book is useful as far as it goes and I will recommend it to my students.

However, many students have difficulties with multiple choice questions because they are unable to grasp the nature of the rules regarding the marking of such questions and the need to optimise their choices in the true/false/don't know paradigm. A discussion of marking systems and optimising choices would enhance future editions. Although this information is available in other books on multiple choice question techniques, it would be very useful if it could be included in the next edition of this book.

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Multiple Sclerosis, by Bernie O'Brien. Pp. 64, illustrated. Office of Health Economics, London, 1987. £1.00.

This small book, No. 87, from the Office of Health Economics, is of the same excellent standard as previous titles in the series updating an earlier MS publication (OHE, 1975). Although the main aim is to 'examine the health service consequences of the disease in terms of resource utilisation in hospitals and general practitioner consultations', it also succeeds at the more familiar levels as well as with the main aim. The clinico-pathological introduction is done well. The three epidemiological sections cover England and Wales, international comparisons and 'clues to a cause?'. The standard of the tables, graphs and maps is extremely good throughout and all provide excellent teaching material. The decision to include both Kurtzke's scales in full cannot be praised too highly. After all, the major basis to research into MS, as the author points out, is to define a homogeneous patient group and currently these are the only scales which seem to be accepted by investigators from different countries.

The discussions on treatment, health costs and also the future are equally well done. The references have been thoughtfully selected, a difficult task in this subject.

In summary, this is a superb little book to suit the needs of nearly everybody – and at £1.00 a copy there can be little excuse not to purchase one or more copies – the latter to ensure at least one copy stays on your shelf.

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Objectives for Care: Specifying Standards for Clinical Nursing, edited by G.D. Snowley & P.J. Nicklin. Pp. xiv + 77. Austen Cornish, London, 1987. £7.50.

In just over seventy pages this book attempts to list a set of nursing objectives for promoting individualized patient care based on an activities of daily living framework. That the editors have succeeded in distilling the array of information down into several statements under each of the main headings is noteworthy. However one is reminded of a statement in the introduction when considering the content and purpose of the book – 'what has been accomplished in preparing this book should not be measured in terms of its completion – the product – but by the quality and rigour of the debate – the process' (p. xii). It is a pity the reader is not party to this exchange because without it the book could be perceived as nothing more than a statement of the obvious.

However, this criticism would be missing the point and it would take away several of the book's strengths. Firstly, the authors have succeeded in linking an individualized patient care approach with the nursing process. They have produced core statements that will guide practitioners and learners to look more carefully at their daily practice. They have established a set of baseline statements and they have successfully demonstrated the differences between the assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation phases of nursing care.