Legal Aspects of Medical Practice, fifth edition, Bernard Knight. Pp. 140, not illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, London, Edinburgh, New York, Tokyo, 1992. Paperback £14.95.

This is the fifth edition of a textbook which is already well known and widely respected. This new edition brings the textbook up to date and contains new material on organ transplantation, no fault compensation and the General Medical Council's new advice on advertising and the disparagement of colleagues. As its title suggests, this is not an in-depth forensic medicine textbook, although there are excellent chapters on sexual offences, wounding and most particularly the doctor at the scene of death. The author's style is very readable and the text is liberally interspersed with flow charts and useful diagrams. As one who practices in a rural community I particularly appreciated his pictorial representation of shotgun wounds. The book also appeals to me as a Scot in that it contains chapters on the differences between the legal system encountered in England and Wales and those of Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It is always difficult to keep such a textbook completely up to date and despite the authors heroic attempts, since publication there have been minor changes in the implementation of Industrial Injury Benefit. Every general practice trainer should possess a copy of this book and its chapters would form the basis of many useful tutorials for their trainees on what is often a much neglected area of general practice teaching. Its style, content, presentation and cost make it a highly recommended purchase.

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Treatment of Diabetic Neuropathy, A New Approach, edited by D.F. Horrobin. Pp. 148, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, New York, Tokyo, Melbourne, 1992. Hardback £29.50.

Books are written for varied reasons. This has been compiled to advance the hypothesis that administration of large quantities of gamma-linolenic acid may improve diabetic neuropathy. The editor has a major interest in this matter, being involved in a research institute linked with a commercially available preparation of the essential fatty acid.

The quality of information presented is variable. A chapter describing essential fatty acid metabolism in relation to diabetes is generally informative, although it loses much of its impact by dwelling upon streptozotocin-induced hyperglycaemia in rats rather than human diabetes. Following acute hyperglycaemia in rats, 90 mg kg⁻¹ of gamma-linolenic acid (far in excess of a feasible human dose) reverses the decrease in motor nerve conduction velocity within 3 days. Whether these acute effects will be shown to have any bearing upon human diabetes remains to be seen. Curious statements abound, such as 'It does not seem always to be appreciated, even by experts . . . that acyl is simply a generic name for any fatty acid.' Insulin-dependent diabetic subjects apparently exhibit modest decreases in plasma gamma-linolenic

acid, but adequate insulin therapy corrects this. As no comparable change is seen in type 2 diabetes, in which condition identical microvascular changes are seen, the direct relevance of these measures must surely be questioned. The difficulty of persuading people to swallow many oil-filled capsules every day is acknowledged. Other chapters describe the effect of gamma-linolenic acid upon retinopathy, rheology and neuropathy in human diabetes. The former suggests a modest improvement, the second no effect and the third possible improvement in selected electrophysiological tests. Presentation of data as change from baseline values makes objective assessment difficult. Why publish such primary data in a book? Publication as a peer-reviewed article will now be precluded unless duplicate publication is contemplated.

It is not clear for whom this book is written. The title is misleading, implying as it does that clinical application is now justified. A more appropriate title would be 'Experiments on Diabetic Neuropathy'. The book is premature: the hypothesis remains to be properly investigated.

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Tutorials in General Practice, second edition, Michael Mead and Henry Patterson. Pp. xi + 205, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, London, New York, Melbourne, Tokyo, Edinburgh, 1992. Paperback £14.95.

This book is now in its second edition and represents the result of tutorial discussion between the trainer and his trainee during a trainee year. This edition has been refined and updated but follows the same pattern as before. Each chapter begins with an illustrative case history of the problem under consideration: for example, chest pain, abdominal pain, giddiness, and then considers the incidence, prevalence and significance of the condition. The tutorial discussion takes place as the problem unfolds. It is a unique method of presenting factual information for the benefit of trainees in general practice and there is even an MCQ at the end to test one's understanding and knowledge of the content. This book will also provide trainers with an excellent model for tutorial sessions and each chapter contains readily digestible factors about everyday general practice. The initial chapter on how to structure a tutorial is also well thought out and presented. In such a small book it is difficult to be totally comprehensive but each chapter also contains a most welcome suggested further reading list. Every general practice trainer present and prospective should read this book carefully and use its framework as a skeleton on which to hang their own trainee tutorials.

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