**Book Reviews**


Someone, I have forgotten whom, said that man is distinguished from animals by his urge to take (eat) medications. Certainly there is much curiosity, interest and justifiable self concern over the medicines we take. Their purpose and dangers need to be spelled out in simple language. Peter Parish takes the reasonable view that knowledge shared with the general public makes for more effective use of medications and reduced danger. Previous demand for the book has been sustained, leading to this expanded and up-to-date fifth edition. Undoubtedly some sections of the health professions would benefit from referring to the book; but not nurses, pharmacists and doctors. The real audience is the lay public.

Basic principles of drug use, common indications and situations for drug use and an alphabetically listed 'Popular Pharmacopoeia' are included in a style and format which make Penguin Reference Books so popular. Professor Parish in his work is presumably awash with details about drugs, and a prodigious amount of information has been included in his work. He has produced a miniature Martindale for the masses in digestible form. The information appears, in general, accurate considering the hundreds of drugs mentioned. One little quibble: chlorozemazine and sulpiride are miscast chemically when described as a benzodiazepine and a phenothiazine respectively. We doctors will have to keep on our toes when we treat the readers of this book – who will no longer accept the role of passive recipients.

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'Answering multiple choice questions is now a virtually inescapable part of medical education'. The opening sentence of this paperback's preface sets the scene, and the general reader need only be reminded that such questions are now a similarly inescapable hurdle for trainee radiologists facing the Royal College's fellowship examination (FRCR). Examiners spend much time and effort in refining these questions, using regional organizers to present questions from across the country to an expert panel. Small wonder that goods so carefully vetted are then stored away in a 'bank', and not made easily accessible.

Candidates naturally cry out for practice runs over these hurdles, and authors anxious to help impose a tough assignment on themselves. Their model questions must cover a vast range of all the systems and techniques, including here ultrasound, radionuclide imaging and computed tomography. Chapman and Robinson do all this brilliantly, and much more. They provide an illuminating introduction to the peculiarities of multiple choice questions as an examination format. They even discuss guessing. Most importantly, their questions only account for the left hand pages of the book. Opposite are annotated answers, providing brief comments on what the candidate may have got right or wrong. In this way the volume becomes a lively piece of learning rather than a dry practice run.

Book reviews that end with recommendations that every library or department should buy a copy strain credulity and realism. For once there is no difficulty here: all radiology trainees heading for the final FCRR examination will wish to have a go at this one, I think. It is a cheap investment at the price.

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This book reminds me of the proverbial curate's egg, i.e. 'good in parts! The first six chapters cover comprehensively - and readily - an account of the anatomical and arthrological aspects of the vertebral column. This is followed by discussion of segmental innervation and the relationship of the autonomic system to vertebral pain syndromes.

I found the chapter devoted to referred pain particularly refreshing because the author did not fear to superimpose his own practical experience of the 'variability and untidiness' of dermatomes and sclerotomes on to orthodox neurological dogma, which tends to be based solely on anatomical and physiological teaching. Thus, he has not ducked the vexed problem of the interpretation of 'secondary' hyperalgasia and soft tissue tenderness. Indeed, he has some interesting and imaginative comments about his therapeutic approach to this problem. There follows a clear, and well-illustrated chapter on the author's general approach to clinical examination.

I found some of the subsequent chapters devoted to the details of regional examination, to be rather turgid and repetitive in their prose, and frankly difficult to read. Indeed, I doubt that anyone relying exclusively on this text would be able to extract more than a 'bird's eye view' of Mr Grieve's technology. Possibly these chapters are aimed at a student who has already attended a lecture/demonstration course, in which case they would probably represent a valuable source of revision.

It is true that the book is prolifically illustrated, with photographs of - incidentally extremely pulchritudinous models (all of whom are - somewhat unusually - acknowledged by their names in the opening pages of the book!). However, as the author himself concedes, it is well nigh impossible to teach manipulative techniques by descriptions and photographs alone. One wonders, therefore, why he has found it necessary to go into such minute detail. Incidentally, many of the thrusts illustrated seemed to savour more of osteopathy than the type of manipulative approach normally employed by physiotherapists.

The main defect with this book, however, as with so many similar texts, is the lack of any validation of the methods described, by conventional clinical trial criteria. Anecdotal
claims concerning the benefit of physical methods of treatment, have proved notoriously unreliable when they have been subjected to comparative trials by 'neutral' observers, recently. Therefore, it is vital to provide the statistical evidence for the benefits to be expected in the various conditions which are described.

Having read the book, however, I felt sufficiently intrigued by Mr. Grieves' methods to wish that I could visit and observe his methods in a clinical setting. To provoke such an interest is, presumably what such a book sets out to achieve.

It is well produced in paperback, it has a useful bibliography and list of suggested further reading, but it does not contain an index.

In summary, it could be the basis of a much needed interchange of views between physiotherapists, osteopaths and chiropracters. Certainly it would be a useful asset to most libraries in hospital physiotherapy department.

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This small book aims at encouraging students to learn about biochemistry, or have their learning reinforced, by asking questions. It is as if the reader is attending tutorials in which the authors ask questions, correct the answers and provide explanations in a completely standard form.

The 200 questions presented by the authors are either in the form of 5-part completion statements or 5-choice answer questions with one or more alternatives correct. They cover a wide range of biochemical topics in the fields relevant to medical and dental studies and the explanations provided are mostly very clear and concise. It would be stretching things a little to state that the book contains 'everything a medical undergraduate needs to know about biochemistry' but there is a generous sample of what a student's knowledge should be. Certainly a student knowing the correct answer and explanation for the majority of questions should have little to fear from an examination in this subject.

The book is divided into two parts. First there are 10 sets of 20 questions, each set covering a variety of topics and arranged so that questions in successive sets are progressively harder. The second part comprises explanations arranged in topics, cross-referenced so that it is easy to find the relevant explanation for each question. Printing each question twice to achieve this has meant an increase by a third in the size of the book. It seems questionable whether much advantage has been gained. By the time students come to use the book, they are unlikely to gain much by having questions grouped in terms of difficult and presented questions in sets each covering a variety of topics may simulate examination conditions but probably does not much enhance the value of this book as a self-assessment/revision aid.

While aimed at undergraduates, there is no doubt that the subject matter of the book is also relevant to postgraduates studying basic medical science for higher qualifications.

Whether the book helps those who seek to create questions, as the authors suggest in the preface, is another matter.

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The fact that the first edition of this excellent monograph sold out and required the production of a second only eighteen months after its initial publication is a significant tribute to its importance in this field.

Dr Selwyn Crawford has for many years been the leading proponent of the art and science of analgesia and anaesthesia in obstetric practice in this country and, I suspect, the world. He is a zealot, and as such excites opposition particularly from the proponents of 'natural childbirth'.

He has never believed that acceptance of pain should be held to represent some sort of maternal triumph over adversity. Indeed he points out that it can harm both mother and child.

Whilst few, if any, departments in which I have worked have achieved the high standards that he lays down, this does not mean that he is wrong or that we should not continue to strive to achieve them. Lack of resources, both in money and manpower, are often used as an excuse for failure, particularly in communication with the patient and gaining their cooperation.

Few subjects excite more mumbo-jumbo than this one, and for those who sometimes feel slightly apologetic at the use of high technology medicine this book should serve not only as a bible but help to give that technology a human face.

I cannot commend it too highly to established consultant and student alike.

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In the days of the extended family the giving of advice on bringing up children was left to the elders in the community – usually grandparents and aunts. Nowadays young mothers, all too frequently, have no-one to turn to except their Health Visitor, GP or clinic. The only alternatives are an article in one of the women's magazines or a radio phone-in.

The trouble with the professionals is that they are thought
Mobilization of the spine

John H. Glyn

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