chapters begins with a brief review of normal physiological function, followed by ways in which mechanisms are disturbed in renal disease, with particular reference to problems in the elderly.

The remaining chapters cover glomerular disease, renal involvement in systemic disease, infections, obstruction, acute and chronic renal failure and hypertension. For each topic the authors have summarized the existing information on adults in general and expanded this to provide information that is specific to the elderly, both from the literature and from their own experience. Where there is a dispute about treatment, they are not afraid to say so, but they give clear details of their current practice and their reasons for following each course of action. Examples include the use of plasma exchange or gamma globulin therapy in thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura, the use of ACE inhibitors in hypertension and heart failure, erythropoietin for treatment of anaemia, and the place of dialysis and transplantation in elderly patients.

I would recommend this book, not just for physicians in elderly care, but as a source of sound practical advice for nurses and medical staff on nephrology wards and renal units. It also provides excellent revision for M.R.C.P. candidates and nephrologists. It should be included on the shelves of the postgraduate library.

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Professor Stewart Truswell’s second edition of his ABC of Nutrition maintains the very high standard of accuracy and readability as his first edition, based on articles on nutrition in a clinical setting in the British Medical Journal in 1985 which avoided discouraging biochemistry. It will appeal to a wide section of health professionals interested in nutrition, including medical students, general practitioners, or dieticians who might like to refer to subjects such as ‘Reducing the Risk of Coronary Heart Disease’ or ‘Diet and Hypertension’ in the first two chapters. It has a completely new front cover and wearing a stethoscope, has been replaced with a design containing ‘healthy’ foods such as rice and fish.

Professor Truswell has a gift for making some of the complex facts of nutrition appear simple, and the text is liberally sprinkled with tables figures and insets which contain a surprising amount of information in small compass. For example the question is asked ‘Doctor, please take my blood for cholesterol measurement. Then what?’ and is answered in a useful practical format. There are 18 chapters including obesity, vitamins, nutrition and for pregnancy for example. The section on food poisoning is helpful for doctors wishing to be updated on this common condition and the chapter on the controversial ‘Food Sensitivity’ is competently and fairly handled.

I rate this book highly, and it is good value for £8.95. It does not pretend to be an exhaustive treatise but all chapters contain up to 15 references and selected further reading if required for the X Y Z of human nutrition.


For decades the Registrars General in the United Kingdom have used occupational social class as a social discriminator for morbidity and mortality, but with some statistics available for regions and local government districts. More recently has come the realization that large geographical areas are heterogeneous and that the character of a neighbourhood can change in a conurbation within a few yards. There has been a search for better social discriminators and measures of deprivation. Money lenders have long recognized the importance of the home address in describing the individual. The introduction of postcodes into the National census, and into morbidity and mortality returns provides the potential for small area statistics, and therefore more homogeneity within and heterogeneity between the units concerned. This book describes the results of analyses within Scotland based on the postcode sector (Edinburgh city has 61) and results from the 1981 census, using a deprivation score obtained by adding unweighted components for overcrowding, male unemployment, lower social class and no car.

The deprivation score shows correlations with many indices of mortality and morbidity, and highlights what happens, for example, in Glasgow city, where affluent middle-class ghettos immediately adjoin impoverished areas.

This exercise is based on one census only. Results from the 1991 census will provide the opportunity to see how rapidly morbidity and mortality reflect changing circumstances within communities.

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The British Medical Bulletin has a long and distinguished history of publishing authoritative reviews of currently important clinical topics which present basic experimental scientific data that are relevant to the clinical problem discussed fully in the same issue. This volume carries on this tradition. The last two decades have seen major advances in our understanding of the anatomy, neurophysiology and pharmacology of the central and peripheral mechanisms of pain following the proposal by Melzack and Wall of the ‘gate-control’ theory of pain, and the identification by Kosterlitz and Hughes of the endogenous peptide ligands for opiate receptors.

In this volume, the underlying mechanisms and clinical management of different types of pain are fully discussed.