A second major criticism relates to content. Hence instead of using the well accepted classification of hypertension proposed by the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the authors produce their own somewhat idiosyncratic version. Misspelling of Korotkoff does little to allay the readers' misgivings and similarly it is news to me that labetalol is a 'combined α and β_1 blocker and a β_2 agonist'.

The book is system rather than symptom orientated. In my medical ante-natal clinic, palpitation, faints and funny turns are amongst the commoner symptoms – I could find no mention of any of these problems in the index making the 'practical reference book' claimed by the publishers a little unbelievable. It may improve in a second edition but I fear it has a long long way to go.

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Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition: a Practical Guide. Third edition, G.D. Phillips and C.L. Odgers. Pp. xi + 272, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1986. £13.95.

As outlined by the authors 'The book is intended as a practical guide for student and for nursing, medical dietetic and pharmacy staff who are placed in the position of managing patients receiving parenteral and enteral nutrition'. Almost by definition a book of 236 pages and a further 23 pages of Appendices cannot achieve this. Moreover, it should be pointed out to the potential readership that the overall emphasis of the book is directed towards parenteral nutrition, the single chapter on enteral nutrition being 14 pages long. Having said this, there are a number of very good aspects of this book. The chapters on the physiological and biochemical bases of nutrition, metabolic effects of starvation, sepsis and trauma, carbohydrate, proteins and lipids are all very good. Some readers, however, may be rather irritated to find that the references are not referred to in the text. The chapter on water and electrolytes is outstanding.

I would take the authors to task about the emphasis they place on inflammatory bowel disease being a common indication for parenteral nutrition – particularly ulcerative colitis, as well as its use as an adjunct to various forms of cancer therapy, particularly when they later refer to the critical review of Brennan.

I do not think therefore that this is necessarily a book that students, nursing dietetic or pharmacy staff should buy. However, all medical libraries should carry a copy and this book would be a suitable reference for all house staff, nursing, dietetic and pharmacy staff and would be a suitable addition to departmental book collections as well as finding its way onto all wards where parenteral and enteral nutrition is practised.

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Practical Psychiatry of Old Age, John Wattis and Michael Church. Pp. x + 195, illustrated. Croom Helm, London, Sydney, 1986. £19.95 (hardback), £8.95 (paperback).

This is a friendly and enthusiastic book aiming to provide a basic text for a wide range of health and social care workers involved with providing psychiatric services for old people. The aim is to be essentially practical with an emphasis on the working together between members of a multi-disciplinary team rather than pre-occupation with too much theory, and this is perhaps the major strength of the text. The problem-solving approach is used fairly consistently and there are illustrative case histories supported by flow diagrams that are important in holding the reader's interest and maintaining firm contact with the realities of life.

The writing is by no means bland, some of the attitudes assumed may raise a few hackles, and there is considerable variation in the depth at which topics are dealt. These features may add to the attractiveness and palatability of the whole, but the absence of a positive discussion of the role of the general practitioner and the other members of the primary health care team does seem to be a weakness. Sad, because one would feel that general practitioners would be amongst the potential readership of this very useful book, and perhaps their role might be developed in further editions. No-one is left in any doubt that there is a great deal that can be done about psychiatric disorder in the elderly and useful guidance and ideas for further thinking are provided for people who are directly involved in the care of the elderly. One would think that the increasing number of administrators who have little direct experience of the work themselves might find this a useful text. The cost of the paperback edition is modest and should be within the reach of the pockets at which it is aimed.

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Prescribing – What, When and Why? John Fry, Martin Godfrey and Brian N.C. Prichard. Library of General Practice Vol.11. Pp. vi + 346. Churchill, Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1986. £20.00.

I thought once of writing a paper on 'A Hundred Ways of Prescribing Nothing'. Like many good ideas it never got out of my pending file. Prescribing has often been used as a way of establishing doctor power or as a substitute for the difficult tasks of patient communication, health education and the alteration of fixed habits. For one stern practitioner that I heard of, the handing over of the folded slip was a mute signal that the consultation was at an end. No words could pass thereafter. There is a remnant here of the old bottle tradition that GPs inherited from the apothecaries. However, this may be, the prescription pad is likely for the foreseeable future to remain one of the tools of trade so this book designed to improve the use to which it is put is welcome. Written by a general practitioner, the editor of MIMS and a professor of clinical pharmacology it should be a very useful text for trainees in search of material to discuss during tutorials. They