Book Reviews

Clinical Gastroenterology, Johannes Bircher. Pp. vii + 528. Bailliere Tindall, London, Philadelphia, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto, 1988. £15.00.

The availability of an ever increasing number of new and potent drugs demands that the physician prescribing them has a corresponding knowledge of their possible side effects. This applies perhaps more to the gastroenterologist than to physicians of other persuasions, for the gut remains the main portal by which most drugs are administered and frequently bears the brunt of any adverse reactions as a consequence. Such reactions always need to be borne in mind in the differential diagnosis of gastrointestinal disease. Conversely, pre-existing gastrointestinal disease may enhance or indeed precipitate an adverse reaction and caution needs to be exercised when prescribing for such patients.

These, and other aspects of adverse drug reactions, as they effect the gut, are well described in this latest edition of *Clinical Gastroenterology*. It is a well referenced multi-authored review within the compass of a relatively slim volume. Nearly half the book is devoted to reactions in the liver, which is perhaps not surprising, but there are chapters on both the upper and lower gut, gastrointestinal bleeding, malabsorption and the pancreas to give balance.

In a rapidly changing field delays in publication inevitably lead to omissions of more recent research such as the effect of NSAIDs on the small intestine but, nevertheless, it is a surprisingly comprehensive volume which every gastroenterologist would find useful to have to hand. Indeed, it would be a worthwhile addition to any medical library.

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Medicine: The Bare Essentials, E.H.I. Friedman and R.E. Moshy. Pp. xxxi + 302. John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, New York, Brisbane, Toronto, Singapore, 1989. £7.95.

This book purports to span the entire medical syllabus and yet sells for less than £8: I approached it with scepticism. Medicine (including minor specialties), surgery, paediatrics, psychiatry and obstetrics and gynaecology are all covered in less than three hundred pages. A terse style, and the extensive use of lists and abbreviations throughout allows a phenomenal amount of information to be compressed. The format may not be to everyone's liking and the abbreviations could be difficult for a novice to comprehend, but turning to my own area of interest I found no errors of importance. Colleagues in other specialties were also impressed, given the book's obvious limitations imposed by its size. This would be a useful book for a cost conscious final year student to carry around in his/her white coat pocket and viewed in terms of information per pound it must have few equals. It will compete directly with

the excellent Oxford Textbook minibooks, but stands this comparison surprisingly well.

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On-Call: Out-of-Hours Telephone Calls and Home Visits. Practical Guides for General Practice 9, J.D.E. Knox. Pp. x + 66. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, Tokyo, 1989. £5.95.

I cannot think of a better small book to hand to a trainee in his first week in general practice. This book could well be essential reading before he receives his first out-of-hours telephone call. It takes him through the various aspects of telephone answering. Initially I thought it would be impossible to write a whole book on such a small subject but James Knox writes with clarity and sets out the general principles in a manner which is both thought-provoking and stimulating.

There are increasing pressures on general practitioners to maintain, and indeed improve on, good doctor-patient relationships. During the day the good offices of the receptionist at the surgery are vital. However, it is the doctor who is at the sharp end of the telephone during the evening and night, and this book clearly shows the difficulties encountered, and the problems to be overcome. When the trainee has read 'On-call' he will realise that there is an art to answering the out-of-hours telephone call. He will be well armed by the chapter on 'Tactics' and when he is established in practice he should be spoilt for choice after the chapter on 'Organisation and equipment'.

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Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry. 2nd Edition, Michael Gelder, Dennis Gath and Richard Mayou. Pp. xiv + 1079. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, Melbourne, 1989. £45.00 (Hardback) – £22.95 (Paperback).

There is no shortage of textbooks of psychiatry. Indeed, the range is refreshingly wide but extremely confusing for beginners. Probably the best classification is by length, which will naturally reflect the authors' different intentions. Thus, at one extreme there is the *'Handbook of Psychiatry'*, although each of the five volumes would require at least one hand. But the majority include a few short lecture notes together with a number of shorter texts. The *'Oxford Textbook'* comes in between, with about 1,000 pages. There are few others in this category and the most important is probably the *'Edinburgh'* textbook (Kendall and Zeally, *Companion to Psychiatric Studies*). The *'Oxford'*