Book reviews

The reviewers have been asked to rate these books in terms of four items: readability, how up-to-date they are, accuracy and reliability, and value for money, using simple four-point scales. From their opinions, we have derived an overall 'star' rating: ★ = poor; ★★ = reasonable; ★★★ = good; ★★★★ = excellent

Sports medicine: practical guidelines for general practice, Domhnall MacAuley. Butterworth Heineman, 1999. £ 22.50, paperback. ISBN 0 7506 3730 7. ★★★★★

The public is constantly being made aware of the benefits of sports to good health. As a result, increasing numbers are taking part in sports, with the result that many are sustaining injuries with which they present to their general practitioner (GP). GPs have to develop experience in the diagnosis and management of sporting injuries, and know when to consider referral to a specialist. Furthermore, the understanding of sports medicine requires some knowledge of the sports being undertaken, and also about the physiology and mechanics of the body in motion. Patients who present to their GPs with sporting injuries often wish to resume the activity and will depend upon their GP giving them appropriate advice about rehabilitation and resumption of the sport.

This book on sports medicine for the GP is well written and easy to read. It starts with a discussion on the benefits of exercise and basic physiology. It then discusses how minor injuries are treated, followed by the expertise required in managing emergencies and being fully aware of the cardiac risks associated with sports. It also explains the principles for managing injuries to the head and spine, although these are not sufficiently detailed. For example, the role of magnetic resonance imaging, the investigation of choice for excluding nerve root injuries in the spine, is not adequately discussed. Injuries to the various parts of the body are described in individual chapters, together with their management. These sections could have benefited from more figures demonstrating the anatomy of structures likely to be damaged, for example, in the hands. Similarly, the section on injecting soft tissue injuries like lateral epicondylitis, tenosynovitis and carpal tunnel syndrome, are described, but these would benefit from illustrations. The author is incorrect in suggesting that the physician should use gloves when injecting, as there is no evidence that the use of gloves reduces the risk of infection; it is more important to emphasise the use of the 'no-touch' technique.

Apart from these minor draw-backs, this book is very readable and discusses topics which are not often dealt with in other books on sports medicine, such as diet in sport and women in sport. I think this is an excellent book, which provides good value for money for any GP who treats, or wish to treat, patients with sports injuries.

A K BHALLA
Consultant in Rheumatology, Royal National Hospital
for Rheumatic Diseases, London, UK

Emergency abdominal surgery, 3rd edn, PF Jones, ZH Krukowski, GG Youngson, eds, xxii + 556, illus. Chapman and Hall Medical, 1998. £45, paperback. ISBN: 0 412 81950 3. ★★★★★

This is a useful handbook for any specialist registrar in general surgery. Indeed, with the reduction of on-call duties and duration of training, many registrars have much less experience of emergency surgery during their training, making such a book a valuable addition to the on-call room.

The book covers abdominal emergencies under broad categories of gastrointestinal, urological, gynaecological, and vascular, and has clearly been updated to take account of the increasing use of laparoscopy in both diagnosis and treatment of the acute abdomen. That said, the use of laparoscopy in gastrointestinal haemorrhage, resection of gastric leiomyomas, division of adhesions and drainage of intra-abdominal sepsis is not mentioned in the book, perhaps an indication of its inherent conservatism.

The layout too is fairly conservative, with large unbroken paragraphs of text, where perhaps a few tables, flow diagrams or bullet points might aid the reader in skimming the relevant chapter.

The book is, however, likely to provide a valuable aid to many trainees and deserves to be added to most registrars' collections. It certainly provides sensible and practical approaches to all in intra-abdominal emergencies.

MICHAEL RHODES
Consultant Surgeon, Norfolk and Norwich NHS Trust,
Norwich, Norfolk, UK

Survey research methods, Judith Calder, 42 pp. Association for the Study of Medical Education (ASME Medical Education Research Booklet 6), 1988. £8 (£6 to ASME members), paperback. ISBN 0 904473 23 6. ★★★★★

This booklet gives practical guidance on starting, running and completing a research project. It is a slim volume but contains a lot of practical advice and is surprisingly comprehensive. The examples of research relate mainly to medical education, because the booklet is from a series produced by the Association for the Study of Medical Education. Presentation is clear, with short chapters, and the text is easy to read.

This booklet would be a good starting point for undergraduates undertaking their dissertations and new postgraduates entering

research. The range of references is limited but one would hope that their supervisors and libraries would offer more detailed guidance. While this booklet can be read at one sitting, I suspect that new researchers would review it often in their early work as the concepts, practical aspects and writing-up require a logical framework that is well summarised in the booklet. It is important to encourage social, medical, and educational researchers to read a work such as this before they start data collection. Many people, including clinicians, have been known to amass vast amounts of data, often badly, and then to search for a friendly statistician who they hope will tell them what it all means. Early sensible planning and realistic time-scales will save much wasted effort and anxiety. This booklet offers important useful advice to the budding researcher.

HUGH F THOMAS
MRC Epidemiology Unit, Llandough Hospital, South
Glamorgan CF64 2XW, UK

Key topics in respiratory medicine, WJM Kinnear, IDA Johnston, IP Hall, pp x + 169. BIOS Scientific Publishers Ltd, 1999. £18.95, paperback. ISBN 1 85996 271 8. ★★★★★

This small but concise book has been prepared by three Nottingham chest physicians with a broad range of clinical interests and reflects their wealth of clinical expertise. The book covers a wide range of clinical topics related to common chest problems as well as specific disease areas, and will be of great use to the junior doctor, whether houseman or senior house officer, who has just joined a respiratory firm. It will also be of help to the specialist registrar, although he/she will need to supplement his reading with specialist texts. It provides a problem-solving approach, as well as full details of practical procedures such as pleural biopsy techniques. The practical use of techniques such as non-invasive ventilation can be found, as well as common clinical topics including lung cancer and airways disease. The chapter on *Aspergillus* provides a comprehensive clinical guide to this difficult area. The chapter on chest X-rays is presented without illustrations and hence the information is less valuable, although there are many excellent texts in this area.

The book is easy to read and up-to-date and I have no hesitation in recommending it to junior doctors interested in learning more about respiratory medicine.

PHILIP EBDEN
Consultant Physician, Prince Philip Hospital,
Llanelli, UK