multiple dangers of smoking cigarettes are repeatedly emphasised throughout the text.

The book seems to have been printed in somewhat of a hurry. Several statements are repeated and even one of the figures and paragraph of the text are duplicated.

The book will be especially useful for senior medical students and recent entrants to general practice. It is succinct enough to be kept in the consulting room as an *aide-mémoire*.

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Same Again: A Guide to Safer Drinking, Marcus Grant. Pp. 127. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1984. £1.95, \$4.95 (Australia, Canada), \$7.95 (New Zealand).

Unfortunately many doctors still regard alcoholism as synonymous with cirrhosis, brain damage, addiction, and other virtually untreatable, certainly incurable, illnesses. More enlightened health care workers see the problem in a different light: how to detect the growing number of people at risk from excessive drinking and what kind of advice will prevent them becoming casualties. In literate societies like ours the alcoholism epidemic has spawned innumerable publications from learned treatises and reports of conferences to do-it-yourself guides, the best of which perhaps is the Health Education Council pamphlet, *That's the Limit*. A newcomer therefore has to be judged harshly: Marcus Grant's paperback is good as a self-help guide though not particularly original, and doctors who know little about alcoholism would benefit from reading it before their patients.

His advice is that those who drink regularly (for whatever reason) should keep a drinking diary, not only to quantitate the amount of alcohol but also to gain insight into the pattern of their drinking. Too many people take drinking for granted and have little idea how much alcohol they imbibe; the diary provides information on which they can begin to exert control and make choices. You start with a simple numerical count, filled in at the time and *not* retrospectively, and progress to a goal-orientated exercise in which you offer explanations and excuses for what Grant summarises as the 'where, when, with whom, how much, and why of drinking'. Each of these is discussed in

detail, the writing is crystal clear and easy to follow, and there are some careful case histories (true or false?) which repeatedly illuminate the points that need to be made.

Drinking alcohol cannot be put into a neat compartment separate from other aspects of an individual's life style. Remove or control the drinking habit – going to the pub, business lunches, whatever – and something must be offered in its place. Successful regimens are always based on personal commitment to alternatives like dieting, exercise, meditation, relaxation techniques. Motivation is likely to be greater the earlier the tendency to excess is detected and adjustments easier to make; it may not be necessary to stop drinking completely. Health professionals should stop propagating the view that little or nothing can be done about alcoholism, and if doctors really believe in prevention they must dismantle the barriers they have set up as an excuse for not getting involved. Sensible preventive strategies like the ones outlined here and a positive interventionist approach – 'do not spend too long agonising about the ethics of the situation' – will soon show, in Marcus Grant's words, that there is no such thing as failure, only delayed success.

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Self-Assessment in Psychiatry, Roger Farmer. Pp. viii + 206. Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford, London, Edinburgh, Boston, Melbourne, 1984. £7.50.

This book is intended for the candidates studying for the second part of the MRCPsych. examination. It aims both to prepare the candidates specifically for the M.C.Q. section of the exam., and also to provide a way of testing and increasing one's broad psychiatric knowledge.

It achieves these aims well. The book contains M.C.Qs, with answers, and brief explanatory notes where necessary. The questions are clear and unambiguous, and the explanatory notes make interesting reading. References, and recommendations for further reading, are given with some of the questions. The introduction to the book contains invaluable advice on M.C.Q. technique.

I have some minor criticisms. The section on examination technique could profitably be expanded, particularly for the benefit of those not working in an academic setting. Although the distribution of ques-

tions may reflect College policy, I was struck by the fact that there are only eight questions on child psychiatry, with none at all on adolescence, and only one on British contributions to psychoanalysis. Some of the answers are at least open to discussion, but perhaps this is not such a bad thing in a book of this nature.

In summary I can recommend this book as an aid in studying for Part II of the MRCPsych. examination.

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