Medicines: a Guide for Everybody, Fifth edition, Peter Parish. Pp. 636. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1985. £4.95, \$11.95 (Australia), \$14.95 (New Zealand).

Someone, I have forgotten whom, said that man is distinguished from animals by his urge to take (eat) medications. Certainly there is much curiosity, interest and justifiable self concern over the medicines we take. Their purpose and dangers need to be spelled out in simple language. Peter Parish takes the reasonable view that knowledge shared with the general public makes for more effective use of medications and reduced danger. Previous demand for the book has been sustained, leading to this expanded and up-to-date fifth edition. Undoubtedly some sections of the health professions would benefit from referring to the book; but not nurses, pharmacists and doctors. The real audience is the lay public.

Basic principles of drug use, common indications and situations for drug use and an alphabetically listed 'Popular Pharmacopoeia' are included in a style and format which make Penguin Reference Books so popular. Professor Parish in his work is presumably awash with details about drugs, and a prodigious amount of information has been included in his work. He has produced a miniature Martindale for the masses in digestible form. The information appears, in general, accurate considering the hundreds of drugs mentioned. One little quibble: chlormezanone and sulpiride are miscast chemically when described as a benzodiazepine and a phenothiazine respectively. We doctors will have to keep on our toes when we treat the readers of this book – who will no longer accept the role of passive recipients.

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MCQs in Radiology, A.H. Chapman and P.J. Robinson. Pp. iii + 170. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1985. £6.95.

'Answering multiple choice questions is now a virtually inescapable part of medical education'. The opening sentence of this paperback's preface sets the scene, and the general reader need only be reminded that such questions are now a similarly inescapable hurdle for trainee radiologists facing the Royal College's fellowship examination (FRCR). Examiners spend much time and effort in refining these questions, using regional organizers to present questions from across the country to an expert panel. Small wonder that goods so carefully vetted are then stored away in a 'bank', and not made easily accessible.

Candidates naturally cry out for practice runs over these hurdles, and authors anxious to help impose a tough assignment on themselves. Their model questions must cover a vast range of all the systems and techniques, including here ultrasound, radionuclide imaging and computed tomography. Chapman and Robinson do all this brilliantly, and much more. They provide an illuminating introduction to the peculiarities of multiple choice questions as an examination format. They even discuss guessing. Most importantly, their questions only account for the left hand pages of the book. Opposite are annotated answers, providing brief comments

on what the candidate may have got right or wrong. In this way the volume becomes a lively piece of learning rather than a dry practice run.

Book reviews that end with recommendations that every library or department should buy a copy strain credulity and realism. For once there is no difficulty here: all radiology trainees heading for the final FRCR examination will wish to have a go at this one, I think. It is a cheap investment at the price.

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Mobilization of the spine, Notes on Examination, Assessment and Clinical Method, Fourth Edition, Gregory P. Grieve. Pp. viii + 246 illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1984. £10.00.

This book reminds me of the proverbial curate's egg, i.e. 'good in parts'. The first six chapters cover comprehensively – and readably – an account of the anatomical and arthrological aspects of the vertebral column. This is followed by discussion of segmental innervation and the relationship of the autonomic system to vertebral pain syndromes.

I found the chapter devoted to referred pain particularly refreshing because the author did not fear to superimpose his own practical experience of the 'variability and untidiness' of dermatomes and sclerotomes on to orthodox neurological dogma, which tends to be based solely on anatomical and physiological teaching. Thus, he has not ducked the vexed problem of the interpretation of 'secondary' hyperalgesia and soft tissue tenderness. Indeed, he has some interesting and imaginative comments about his therapeutic approach to this problem. There follows a clear, and well-illustrated chapter on the author's general approach to clinical examination.

I found some of the subsequent chapters devoted to the details of regional examination, to be rather turgid and repetitive in their prose, and frankly difficult to read. Indeed, I doubt that anyone relying *exclusively* on this text would be able to extract more than a 'bird's eye view' of Mr Grieve's technology. Possibly these chapters are aimed at a student who has already attended a lecture/demonstration course, in which case they would probably represent a valuable source of revision.

It is true that the book is prolifically illustrated, with photographs of – incidentally – extremely pulchritudinous models (all of whom are – somewhat unusually – acknowledged by their names in the opening pages of the book!). However, as the author himself concedes, it is well nigh impossible to teach manipulative techniques by descriptions and photographs alone. One wonders, therefore, why he has found it necessary to go into such minute detail. Incidentally, many of the thrusts illustrated seemed to savour more of osteopathy than the type of manipulative approach normally employed by physiotherapists.

The main defect with this book, however, as with so many similar texts, is the lack of any validation of the methods described, by conventional clinical trial criteria. Anecdotal