

How to Write a Paper, edited by G.M. Hall. Pp. 117. BMJ, London, 1994. Paperback, £8.95.

This 117-page short book on *How to Write a Paper* is a multi-authored monograph, unlike several other longer books on the subject which are usually written by one or two authors. Thanks to the excellent editing job of Professor Hall, the thoughts flow smoothly from chapter to chapter. The contributors come from a wide variety of medical journals including the editor of *British Medical Journal* and backgrounds including the sales director of BMJ Publishing Group.

The book is particularly useful for researchers, especially those in the early stage of their career and for whom English is not their first language. Incidentally, there is another new but much longer book on *How to Write & Publish a Scientific Paper* by Robert Day, now in its 4th edition, which is equally helpful to aspiring authors of scientific papers.

As Gerard Piel said, 'Without publication science is dead'. As Day said in the preface of his book, 'good scientific writing is not a matter of life and death; it is much more serious than that'. How to write a good scientific paper is something that is often overlooked in the education of medical doctors and scientists. These two books, both published in 1994, serve to fill this void.

Professor T.O. Cheng
The George Washington University,
Washington DC, USA.

Moral Threats and Dangerous Desires – AIDS in the News Media, D. Lupton. Pp. 186. Taylor and Francis, Basingstoke, 1994. Paperback, £12.95.

Accounts of the sociological aspects of HIV and AIDS tend to induce general sociological conclusions from the particular standpoint of HIV/AIDS, and tend to report conclusions, if any, utilizing HIV/AIDS as a metaphor or as an allegory which may cause the general reader to have some unease.

This book reports on AIDS in the news media (largely focusing on the Australian press) but left me unsatisfied because there was no thesis or synthesis, and no overall conclusion or conclusions. In many ways it is news about the news. There is copious documentation and numerous examples of newspaper headlines along with critical analysis, but what I suspect most of the readers of this journal would wish would be for an introduction outlining the various criteria by which the media could be judged, then quantitative 'results' followed by discussion, hopefully answering obvious relevant questions. Has the media been accurate and responsible? Was the gay press any better (and if so on what criteria) than the 'general' press which, it must not be forgotten, must also cater for its gay readers? Was, and is, media categorization into gay and non-gay appropriate or is it stigmatization and, if it is, what criteria should readers use to draw their conclusions?

This book reveals that human interest sells, and 'case reports' of individuals, breakthroughs (which have to be 'dramatic') or controversy are marketable. In their absence, public interest wanes rapidly so media attention

given to a chronic problem such as HIV/AIDS will necessarily be spasmodic, no matter how high a priority anyone thinks it should be.

P.D. Welsby
Infectious Diseases Unit,
City Hospital,
51 Greenbank Road,
Edinburgh EH10 5SB.

A Guide to Symptom Relief in Advanced Cancer, 3rd Edition, C.F.B. Regnard and S. Tempest. Pp. 69. Haigh and Hochland, Manchester, 1992. Paperback, £4.95.

Much has happened since the second edition of this pocket guide appeared in 1986. Accordingly, it has been extensively updated. There is a new section on syringe drivers and a guide to the use of commonly used drugs. The section on bleeding contains information which is not readily available elsewhere.

However, despite the authors' claim that computer technology has permitted more control over design and layout, I still find the guide overcrowded and the print size uncomfortably small. The four densely tabulated pages on 'diagnosing the cause of the pain' will put off all but the most dedicated reader. Jettisoning the WHO analgesic ladder and a very restrictive view of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs is likely to cause confusion.

Several widely used symptom-relief drugs fail to gain a mention (cisapride, dimethicone, misoprostol, non-acetylated salicylates, oxybutinin, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, and sodium valproate). The advice concerning dexamethasone in superior vena caval obstruction and spinal cord compression is debatable. Is there evidence that intravenous dexamethasone is better than oral dexamethasone in these circumstances? Further, with a drug with a duration of action of more than 2 days, the advice to continue with '6 mg orally in three divided doses' (does this mean 2 mg t.d.s.?) seems unnecessarily complicated.

The advice concerning dyspnoea and nausea and vomiting – both common and important symptoms – is not well ordered. For example, is nabilone really more important in dyspnoea than opioids? Further, given the claim that 25% of patients develop clinical depression, the space allocated to this is inadequate. Thus, in summary, I can give only a limited welcome to this new edition.

R. Twycross
Sir Michael Sobell House,
Churchill Hospital,
Oxford OX3 7LJ.

Palliative Care Open Learning Guide: Controlling the Pain. Illustrated. St Oswald's Hospice, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1994. Loose-leaf binder, £33.00.

'Open Learning' – presumably yet another piece of pedagogical jargon – appears to mean a well-produced A4 manual with blocks of information divided up with

questions and space for written answers. Clearly, those interested in palliative care and who enjoy such an approach will respond enthusiastically to the appearance of the first unit in a new series. I was not clear, however, as to the target audience. Reference is made to the whole team but this guide seems to be focused more narrowly on medical needs.

The Open Learning Guide comes in two parts – one about pain management and the other ‘five whole patient case studies’. The main text is written by two doctors; the case studies compiled by five others. The authors’ decision to abandon the WHO three-step analgesic ladder and to minimize the place of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs casts doubt on the general applicability of this learning aid.

The whole series is the combined creation of a hospice medical director, director of studies, nurse tutor and an expert in open learning. Each of the five planned guides will, presumably, cost £33. A sixth, about the management of lymphoedema, is also promised before the end of 1994. Further guides are planned for bimonthly publication thereafter and will include two for relatives, three on teaching methods, two on more advanced pain and symptom management, and one on hospice management. Clearly innovative and based on considerable expertise and enthusiasm, only time will tell whether they will gain a permanent niche in the educational market.

R. Twycross
*Sir Michael Sobell House,
 Churchill Hospital,
 Oxford OX3 7LJ.*

Radiology and Imaging for Medical Students. D. Sutton. Pp. 270, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, London, New York, Edinburgh, Tokyo, 1994. Paperback, £17.50.

Any book that brings radiology to the attention of the student is to be welcomed as formal exposure to the subject in most medical schools is limited. This book is one of a series that covers the subject from student level to the consultant radiologist. The physical basis of X-rays, ultrasound, CT and MRI are well described in the first chapter. Subsequent chapters consider the various systems of the body and the book finishes with a section on interventional radiology. Most sections start with a list of possible radiological investigations followed by a description of various diseases. The need for a systematic approach when viewing a radiograph is emphasized in the chest section and this helps to avoid guessing at a diagnosis rather than analysing the signs.

The text generally covers most topics well, although the relative importance of some of the older investigations is rather over-emphasized. For instance most radiologists would normally perform CT of the chest to identify nodes rather than a barium swallow.

Radiology is a study of images and the illustrations in the book are generally good, although some would benefit from an accompanying line drawing particularly for a student audience. Some MRI images are included but one or two of the ultrasound images are looking a little old.

The book itself fits neatly into the pocket of a student’s white coat, is a useful introduction to radiology and will

hopefully encourage the student to take a further interest in imaging.

A. Manhire
*4 Eagle Close,
 Beeston Fields Drive,
 Beeston,
 Nottingham NG9 3DY.*

Advances in Pineal Research, Volume 7, edited by G.J.M. Maestroni, A. Conti and R.J. Reiter. Pp. 306, illustrated. John Libbey, London, Paris, Rome, 1994. Paperback, £32.50.

The pineal has been subject to intense debate, and more recently research, from the time of Descartes onwards. While we appear to have moved on a little from the location of the seat of the soul in the pineal, this small midline organ remains enigmatic. Its detailed biochemistry and neurochemistry has been thoroughly explored, but physiologically, other than some form of involvement in reproductive seasonality and breeding, its precise role is essentially unknown. This is particularly true in humans. Nevertheless, the intense research continues, and the present volume represents the results of a recent symposium which is published in the ‘Advances in Pineal Research’ series. This particular volume addresses itself to the relationship between the pineal and the immune system, with particular reference to cancer. It seems only a matter of time before the pineal gets a look in to the burgeoning field of neuroimmunomodulation, and this present volume is full of fascinating studies from the major players in this area. For a symposium publication, the book is remarkably well printed and publication as a paperback has also led to a relatively low price. While clearly addressed to experts within this field, this particular volume will be extremely useful to anyone wishing to explore this particular area of pineal research.

A. Grossman
*St Bartholomew’s Hospital,
 West Smithfield,
 London EC1A 7BE.*

MCQ Practice Papers, P.G. Elliot. Pp. 181. Pastest, Cheshire, 1993. Paperback, £12.50.

The multiple-choice question paper is the part of the examination for membership of the Royal College of General Practitioners which engenders the most anxiety and pessimism amongst candidates. To many the task of preparing for what appears to be a test of global knowledge seems impossible. Advice as to how to do so comes in all shapes and sizes but always includes exhortations to practice with past questions.

The RCGP protects its pool of questions, so originals are not available unless you have member friends with photographic memories. This book, however, provides five complete mock examinations written by a current