

examiner in the format used in the real thing with the addition of check boxes to tempt you to commit your ticks to paper as you go along. With 1,800 different questions this is quite a feast for the practice hungry. Answers are provided separately with useful explanatory notes which means you really can learn by your mistakes. Inevitably occasional minor ambiguities are to be found but, on the whole, the questions are clear and the answers reasonable.

The introduction also provides helpful background on the structure and marking system used by the examiners plus of course the author's own tips on preparation and technique. This is the first such book I have seen since the MCQ paper underwent a major revision in 1992, and should be a valuable resource for anyone preparing for the examination and maybe with reaccreditation for principals looming on the horizon, sales might turn out better than the publishers ever dreamt!

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The Trainee's Companion to General Practice, edited by J. Rosenthal, J. Naish and M. Lloyd. Pp. 301, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, London, Edinburgh, New York, Tokyo, 1993. Hardback, £19.95.

This worthy multi-author book tries hard to introduce the trainee to the art and science of general practice early on in the training year. There are chapters on organization, the consultation, communication, prevention and research – all of which provide insight into these areas for the trainee. The last two chapters provide useful guides on audit and the MRCGP.

The book is hampered in its comprehensiveness by the non-uniformity of styles that inevitably accompanies a set of essays, as well as by a patchy approach which left me wanting to add extra details for completeness.

Although the book is full of 'discussion point' areas which could be focal points for tutorials, some of the essays do not fit into the trainee year plan very well. I particularly enjoyed John Horder's chapter on 'Health not Illness', though I find it hard to see how it fits in with the rest of the book and its remit.

The section on organization is worthy, inevitably out of date in some respects, and difficult to get fired up about. This is one of the most tedious things that trainees must learn and Steve Brant's approach is fair and factual rather than enthusiastic. The flow diagrams and appendices are poorly explained and could be difficult for some trainees to follow without their tutor sitting alongside them.

This is not a trainee's companion as it is not comprehensive enough. It is a useful book for the trainer to own and give the trainee for use as a tutorial feeder. More for the practice library than the individual trainee.

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Quality in Primary Health Care, Report of a Meeting held on 13th October, 1993, Royal Society of Medicine, London, 1993.

Essentially a series of essays, this report will not answer all of these questions but it certainly provides several insights into the cutting edge of quality in primary health care.

The meeting was organized by the NHS Management Executive (as was) at the Royal Society of Medicine. Speakers, many of them are key figures in the development of quality in primary care, range through all aspects of primary health care. This means the report gives a particularly wide overview of what is happening and, more importantly, the possibilities for future development in improving the quality of services. I was particularly interested to read Jill Pitkeathley's consumer perspective covering issues we often forget but that are vital to the effective delivery of health care. I was particularly encouraged to read of the partnership developing in some areas between FHSAs and practices, the former realizing that many practices need time and some external support to help them realize their potential.

This then is a short (only 35 pages) but useful report of current developments in improving quality in primary health care. In his contribution, Dr Donald Irvine comments that quality is 'in the eye of the beholder'. The widespread dissemination of this report would open many eyes to wider possibilities. I recommend it to all primary health care teams and those involved in managing this service.

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New Drugs, 3rd Edition, edited by J. Feely. Pp. 448, illustrated. BMJ, London, 1994. Paperback £17.95.

In compiling a broad collection of topics that first appeared as review articles in the *British Medical Journal*, Professor Feely has marshalled 31 co-authors to help him update and revise each topic for this publication. The first six chapters cover general aspects of clinical pharmacology and therapeutics (drug handling and response, therapeutic drug monitoring and clinical trials, adverse drug reactions and interactions, and prescribing for children and the elderly) with admirable thoroughness and clarity. The authors of later chapters would have done well to read this early section before putting pen to paper. A chapter on drugs in pregnant and breastfeeding women would have been a useful addition to this introductory section. The remaining 25 chapters cover recent developments in every section of the formulary. The standard varies. Some attest to light revision and cite no references later than 1987, while in others, the involvement of an additional co-author has led to a totally fresh approach. Some chapters are referenced comprehensively, while others merely end with a list of articles for further reading. The most striking variation is the amount of trouble taken by authors to set new drugs in context. The best not only advise on drug selection but

also when and how to use drug therapy in the management of the disease in question. The tables and diagrams are excellent and the proofreading has been thorough.

Overall, the book succeeds in presenting in a single volume much that is new and valuable in the field of therapeutics. Specialists will learn little from chapters pertinent to their specialty, but trainees, generalists in hospital and general practitioners should buy this book, read it, and then review their prescribing habits. They and their patients could benefit greatly.

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ABC of Alcohol, 3rd Edition, edited by A. Paton. Pp. 32, illustrated. BMJ, London, 1994. Paperback £7.95.

It is encouraging to note that this publication is now in its third edition, demonstrating the continuing need to be constantly reminded of the fact that alcohol misuse

impinges on all fields of medical practice, and without question forms part of the workload for all health professionals and social workers.

In the preface Alex Paton states that the purpose of the *ABC of Alcohol* is to 'widen horizons so as to provide a core of knowledge that will give practitioners the confidence to deal successfully with the great majority of people who misuse alcohol'. This task has been admirably achieved with more current data, clear succinct diagrams and placing the issue in the appropriate context with an obvious emphasis in the realms of primary health care, which undoubtedly should be the ideal setting for detection management, particularly of heavy drinkers.

The paperback provides a useful whistle-stop tour through the various aspects relating to alcohol-related problems and certainly deserves a place in a general practice library.

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