

Book reviews

Ovarian cancer

Epithelial cancer of the ovary, FG Lawton, JP Neijt, KD Swenerton, eds. pp xviii+299, illustrated. BMJ Publishing Group, London, 1995. £44.95, hardback.

Ovarian cancer continues to present the greatest of clinical challenges, and the range of dilemmas posed by the disease is reflected in a steady stream of new texts around the subject, illuminating the various areas of controversy with variable success. The editors of this book have approached their task by concentrating on the most common group of ovarian cancers, but within that constraint allowing a very wide ranging review of current knowledge. Topics include recent insights in molecular biology, epidemiology, pathology and prognostic variables, and exhaustive articles on current treatment modalities balanced by the possibilities for minimal access surgery for established disease. There are also chapters on the current management of borderline tumours, and the very rare but related malignancy, cancer of the fallopian tube. Quality of life is addressed in two chapters concerning the effects of treatment, and palliation in advanced disease. There is a particularly valuable section covering screening and prevention, including the thorny problem of prophylactic oophorectomy. These reviews are admirably concise, and a lot of ground is covered in just under 300 pages. As would be expected, however, from a multi-author text such as this, a few chapters are less successful than others. The chapter on surgery in early disease is disappointing, and discussion of the important topic of lymphadenectomy in these patients is particularly confused. The chapter on surgery in advanced disease, by comparison, is a model of thoroughness, and is required reading for all clinicians involved in the treatment of ovarian cancer.

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Rheumatology

Rheumatology guidebook. A step-by-step guide to diagnosis and treatment, R Ferrari, J Cash, P Maddison, eds. pp xiii+240, illustrated. Bios Scientific Publishers Ltd, Oxford, 1996. £19.95, paperback.

The aim of the *Rheumatology guidebook* is described in the preface as 'to simplify the assessment and management of the patient with a rheumatic disease'. The authors work in Canada, America and the UK and therefore the book aims to be applicable across the Atlantic. It is written in a didactic and dogmatic style but is very easy to read. An algorithmic approach to the evaluation of rheumatic disease is adopted. The algorithm divides patients into three groups – diffuse pain, localised pain and localised pain with swelling, together with a fourth group outside the algorithm.

The first section describes the general approach to the patient with musculoskeletal disease. There is a description of the diag-

nostic criteria for the major types of inflammatory arthritis and connective tissue disease. These, as the authors point out, were not designed to diagnose the individual patient. There is a useful discussion of the 'right' questions to ask.

The next four sections describe the main conditions in each part of the algorithm and those outside. The examination of the musculoskeletal system is well described. There are also sections on drug therapy, physiotherapy and joint injection.

A useful feature of the book is a 'do's and don'ts' section. These are dogmatic but generally helpful and give advice on avoiding pitfalls in diagnosis and management. This book is aimed at general practitioners, rheumatology trainees and non-specialist physicians. It is a guide and should not replace other well established textbooks but ought to be available in rheumatology departments.

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Healthcare management

Scientific basis of health services, M Peckham, R Smith, eds. pp xi+186, illustrated. BMJ Publishing Group, London, 1995. £22.95, hardback.

The rise of the philosophy of evidence-based medicine has emphasised that medical practice should be based wherever possible on scientific evidence. Given the constraints in health service funding, it is inevitable that healthcare purchasers will seek to identify what is prudent to be effective and will purchase these interventions selectively. Evidence-based medicine will therefore in one form or another start to shape the health services. This book arose out of a conference held in October 1995 under the auspices of the Research and Development Directorate of the Department of Health and with the enthusiastic support of Michael Peckham, the then Director of Research and Development for the NHS. This book is a collection of essays based on selected presentations at this conference. In his introduction to the book, Michael Peckham states that the aim of the book is to stimulate new thinking and to illustrate the diversity of issues that are raised by the move to a scientifically based health service.

The range is indeed impressive and runs from foresight of future advances in science and technology (always difficult to predict), through methods of assessing new technologies, both clinically and economically, through to how we promote and actually implement the result of research findings within the NHS. There are many other interesting issues discussed such as the role of clinical guidelines, the movement towards a primary-care-led health service and the role and interest of the consumer in health research. Two chapters address crucial issues for doctors in these areas, the first concerning the poor quality of information concerning the medical staffing of the NHS and how this is likely to change in the future, and the second

presenting an American model for training in clinical effectiveness. The perspective of the book is largely, but not exclusively, that of the UK NHS.

All of the essays are highly readable, but the order in which they are presented is a little disconcerting with, for instance, chapter 3 on economic evaluation in clinical practice standing apart from chapter 16, the theory and practice of economic appraisal and health care.

Books like this are usually curate's eggs, being rather good in parts and not so in others. This book was an exception to the rule since I thought all of the essays were of great interest and well supported by good bibliographies for those who wished to read more fully. I will use some of these chapters in my teaching of undergraduates and postgraduates as examples of how one needs to look more widely at the implications of healthcare interventions.

For those who want an overview of where programmes of clinical effectiveness may lead us this book is an excellent introduction. I think, however, it might have considered just a little bit more how politics rather than science shapes the health service.

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The healthcare management handbook, K Holdaway, eds. pp 323. Kogan Page, London, 1995. £18.95, hardback. ISBN 0 7494 1477 4

It was useful to find an easily read and digestible paperback which acts as a practical reference guide. Philip Hunt's forward reflects on the benefits of having a text which has been profiled by Keith Holdaway to contain a wide range of current issues. A number of the contributors are well known within the service and the first part of the publication is timely, given our current reflections on the impending election and the position of the health reforms in terms of political ideology.

Many hospitals are attempting to tackle a wide-ranging agenda and the chapter on discharge from hospital and the service delivery references serve as reminders of this. The third part of the book concentrates on managing finance and ranges from a basic explanation of new trends and types of contracts to an exposition of the yet-to-be delivered private finance initiative.

Much can be picked up from the managing people section and I was particularly interested in the chapter on right sizing and redundancy by Lew Swift and the focus on managing staff absence, with simple tips for managers. The information section gives a straightforward explanation of case-mix and the development of hospital information systems with a quick reference in the article from Philip Burnard to an 'introduction to computer software for healthcare managers'. The article by Jean Trainor gives a reasonably quick guide to practical steps for security guidelines and is a useful checklist. The final chapters of the book focus on managing relationships and pose questions about how to 'mature' these relationships over time. The