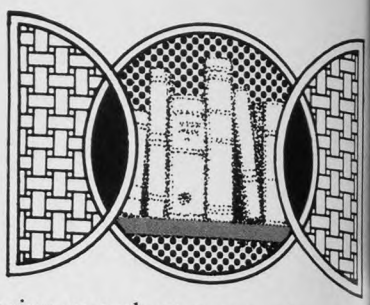
Book Reviews



Management of Common Problems in Geriatric Medicine. *Franklin G. Ebaugh, Jr. (ed). Addison-Wesley Publishing, Menlo Park, California, 1981, 388 pp., $29.95.*

The editor relates that this book is not intended to be an all-encompassing general reference text on geriatric problems. It does not concern itself with diseases that are uncommon or significantly different in their management from those found in younger age groups. The book addresses a number of selected problems common to the elderly.

The 19 chapters can be loosely grouped into six categories: (1) chapters that deal with skeletal-sensory impairment, (2) chapters concerning common medical problems of the elderly whose management and therapy are uniquely different from the younger population, (3) chapters that deal with depression, dementia, and stroke, (4) chapters concerning cardiovascular diseases, (5) chapters concerning urologic problems, and (6) one chapter on management of terminally ill patients.

The content of the chapters addresses conditions that are frequently encountered in the family physician's practice. The material is displayed in an easily read manner. The illustrations, graphs, and pictures are simple but accurate.

There is a paucity of information in the text concerning social problems of aging, money, transportation, family interactions, and stressful adaptations of aging. There are frequent comments urging referral with little mention of continuity of care. Sexual problems receive one short paragraph.

The text deals largely with medical problems and medical surgical treatment. The family practice attitude and approach to comprehensive care to an individual and family are not evident in the book.

This textbook does not address issues in depth. Most discussions are quite brief and serve only as a rapid review, with little new information provided for the family physician. The audience best served by the textbook would be medical and nursing students. For the busy physician desiring a superficial review, the text could have some usefulness.

Donald McHard, MD
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Interpreting the Medical Literature: A Clinician's Guide. *Stephen H. Gehlbach. D. C. Heath & Company, 1982, Lexington, Massachusetts, 1982, 234 pp., $12.95 (paper).*

This work is well designed to assist anyone—student, family physician, allied health professional, or academician—in the art and science of reading and interpreting the medical literature. The text, however, goes beyond its title in scope and is a well-done beginner's compendium on research methodology.

The chapter headings cover virtually all important areas, including issues of study design, measurement, and interpretation of results. Each chapter is concluded with a concise summary of pertinent material covered. The format is well attuned to the audience, using a

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panoply of published articles (well referenced) to illustrate the vicissitudes of research and the problems one may encounter in issues such as population selection, unrecognized bias, and confounding. Original articles are frequently supplemented by somewhat humorous hypothetical examples, which are a useful addition.

The content of this book is certainly readable and relevant to family practice as well as appropriate for anyone interested in a "thinking person's" approach to the medical literature. The writing is well organized, and the illustrations are well done and easily understood.

If I had any suggestions to make about the content, I would only have added an emphasis on follow-up of "letters to the editor" when one feels an article is important. There is a good deal of sophistication needed to ferret out holes in research design. Opinions voiced by others in the field may well shed light that will assist the reader with the "final judgment."

This text should be required reading for all family practice residents and could be the basis for a course for residents or students in research design and critical interpretation of the medical literature.

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Soft Tissue Rheumatic Pain: Recognition, Management, Prevention. *Robert P. Sheon, Roland W. Moskowitz, Victor M. Goldberg, Lea & Febiger, Philadelphia, 1982, 302 pp., price not available.*

Tennis elbow, nerve entrapment disorders, and plantar fasciitis, among other topics covered in this book, are commonly seen entities that are often diagnostically and therapeutically perplexing. Management of such disorders frequently includes a combination of medical folklore, injections, and hope. A more scientific approach to these conditions is needed.

The authors attempt to fill the void of medical literature in this area. Organized by anatomic regions of the body, the topics covered seem at first glance to be highly relevant to family physicians. The book is described by the authors as a "what is it?" and "how to treat it" book. They further contend that "physicians concerned with cost effectiveness are recommending many of the treatment modalities described in this book." Unfortunately, the "physicians concerned" cited within the book are the actual authors of the text. The authors further state that they encourage readers to try the recommended measures even though there is no proven efficacy, yet efficacy is exactly what the reader needs most.

The content of the book is superficial. Complex and baffling conditions such as low back pain are treated in a quick-draw fashion, implying that the suggested cookbook approach will lead to results. Prognosis is rarely discussed; neither is differential diagnosis. Organizationally, the book is equally flawed. Diagnostic techniques are described in such unclear fashion as to make them nonreplicable. Discussion of one condition often merges incoherently with discussion of a second. Illustrations are frequently of poor quality and rarely follow the text.

In summary, the book is a disappointment. Perhaps its main contribution is that it illustrates again

the need for high-quality textbook material in this area.

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Health Promotion: Principles and Clinical Applications. *Robert Taylor (ed), John Ureda, John Denham (assoc eds). Appleton-Century-Crofts, E. Norwalk, Connecticut, 1982, 462 pp., $38.50.*

With the increasing concern on a national basis of cost effectiveness, this book has been published at a most opportune time. The editor and associate editors have emphasized those areas of health promotion that will have a tremendous impact on preventing illness and increasing the quality of life in the future. The enormity of this problem is emphasized when one realizes that up to one half of all deaths in America during 1976 were attributed to unhealthy behavior or lifestyle.

This book is especially important for the family physician, who is in an excellent position to serve as a patient advisor and confidant. The authors stress an important impediment to the clinical application of health promotion. Many physicians feel uncomfortable advising patients concerning health-promoting behavior. This feeling is probably due to an insecure data base of health promotion, and the failure of the traditional medical education system to prepare physicians for the role in health practices counseling. The information in this book can go a long way in correcting these feelings of insecurity about the physician's role in health promotion.

The book is interesting, informative, well referenced, and easy to read, and has excellent illustrations in the form of graphs and tables.

The editors' goals for this book were to have the health care practitioner be able to do the following: (1) understand the epidemiological, biomedical, statistical, behavioral, and educational principles of health promotion, (2) determine the health promotion needs of the individual family, (3) describe specific health practices appropriate for each individual's age, sex, health status, and belief systems, and (4) maintain continuing supervision in accordance with up-to-date scientific data.

The authors have accomplished these goals by carefully selecting health practices based on current medical information and opinion. The book emphasizes eight main areas: nutrition, weight control, exercise, alcohol use, tobacco use, the appropriate use of drugs, rest and sleep, and stress management.

The book is organized into three parts. Part I deals with the principles of health promotion, epidemiology, biomedical aspects of health promotion, prospective medicine and the health hazard appraisal, behavior modification and health care systems, and health promotion in the medical encounter. Part II consists of the applications of health promotion in the areas of nutrition, weight control, exercise, alcohol use, tobacco, the appropriate use of drugs, rest and sleep, and stress management. Part III describes some of the issues and resources of health promotion such as medical activism, health promotion, ethical considerations, future directions of health promotion, literature resources, and institutional resources.

There is no doubt in my mind that an improved level of health care would be obtained if each provider of primary care—the family physician, general internist, obstetrician-gynecologist, and pediatrician—would read this book. The information gained may also be useful in narrowing the gap between physician beliefs and actions regarding both personal habits and prescribing activities.

Ideally these principles should be taught in medical school curriculum, college and universities, high schools, and areas of employment as well as by the individual physician.

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