

BOOK REVIEWS

Ambulatory Medicine: The Primary Care of Families, Second Edition.

Mark B. Mengel and L. Peter Schwiebert. Appleton & Lange, Stamford, Conn, 1996, 700 pp. ISBN 0-8385-1466-9. \$29.95.

Ambulatory Medicine: The Primary Care of Families is a clinical pocket manual meant as a quick reference guide to house officers and practicing physicians. There are many internal medicine pocket manuals, but the main advantage of this one is that it addresses outpatient medical problems. Patients do not initially present to a physician announcing their diagnosis. Instead, they present with cough, sore throat, or acid taste in their mouth. This manual is organized to help address the presenting complaint.

The philosophy behind the organization of this book is excellent; in practice, however, it is difficult to use. The text is well-written, but the organization within each clinical entity makes access to information laborious. The first section of the book is subdivided into sections on chronic illnesses, psychiatric disorders, reproductive health, preventive medicine, and health care for special populations, such as adolescents, patients with disabilities, and the elderly. Each clinical subject is then subdivided into definition, common diagnosis, epidemiology, pathophysiology, symptoms of common diagnoses, signs of common diagnosis, possible laboratory tests, treatments. This format is difficult to follow if you already have a diagnosis in mind when referring to the manual. However, it does provide a construct for approaching a clinical problem.

Ambulatory Medicine: The Primary Care of Families is a good attempt at addressing the clinical problems that face practicing physi-

cians. The information is current and useful, but difficult to access quickly. The book is quite comprehensive, but any attempt to address all ambulatory medicine clinical problems in a handbook inevitably results in a cursory discussion of problems. The book is most valuable as a reference on how to approach specific outpatient clinical problems, and would be a useful guide for medical students during their ambulatory clerkships.

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Heart Failure in Clinical

Practice. John J. V. McMurray, John GF Cleland, editors. Mosby-Year Book Publishing, St. Louis, Mo, 1996, 318 pp. ISBN 1-85317-225-1.

Heart Failure in Clinical Practice is a comprehensive textbook about heart failure written by internationally recognized researchers and clinicians in the field of cardiology. It is an unusual reference text because it focuses on only to one pathological disease state of the heart.

The different writing styles throughout the book are inconsistent and often confusing. Many paragraphs are composed of complex and verbose sentences, obscuring the significance of the subject. It appears as though it was difficult for the editors to translate some of the chapters into American English.

The organization of the chapters do not follow the general etiology of the disease. The initial discussion of the history and epidemiology is good, but pathophysiology, treatment, economic effects, evaluation of the literature, and effect on other systems do not follow the natural course of the disease. This organization makes it difficult to use this text as a quick reference guide in caring for patients.

Each chapter has an extensive ref-

erence list with most references dated in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This suggests a lack of the most recent data, perhaps because of the time required to collect, edit, and publish. The index, although sparse, is adequate.

The target audience is cardiologists with clinical interest in heart failure. The historical overview makes this a good collector's textbook. It is not, however, appropriate for use in the daily care of patients or in the emergency room.

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Women's Health in Primary Care.

Jo Ann Rosenfeld, editor. Williams & Wilkins, Baltimore, Md, 1997, 752 pages. ISBN 0-683-07366-4. \$59.95.

"In an ideal world, this book would not be necessary." So begins the preface to this textbook of women's health in primary care. The premise for the textbook is that classic textbooks of medicine or primary care are based on knowledge of men's health, with the assumption that such knowledge can be easily applied to women as well. Since women's health issues may vary substantially from those of men, a textbook directed specifically at primary health care for women fills an unmet need. The book is authored principally by women, the majority of whom are in academic family medicine.

The book is divided into large sections based on age, including adolescence, adulthood, perimenopausal years, and older women. The adulthood unit is by far the largest, with chapters on health promotion, psychosocial issues, violence, and sexuality followed by a more traditional organ-based approach. Each chapter is clearly targeted to the common problems encountered by primary care providers in the care of women.

The chapters are generally well done, with enough information to be a primer on the subject at hand, and references enough to lead to further reading for those interested. In each case, research that specifically addresses gender differences is highlighted.

The book suffers from the inevitable flaw in any primary care textbook; it can not be comprehensive either in scope or detail and still fit on your shelf. Only common problems are addressed, and even so, holes certainly exist. For example, I was struck by the complete lack of information on premenstrual syndrome. The material provided on each topic provides an overview of general knowledge, epidemiology, clinical presentation, diagnosis, and treatment.

This textbook, as well as others in primary care, will principally serve the needs of learners as well as those who are looking for a handy reference and quick read on common problems. This book serves both purposes, with the unique focus on women's health. The primary care perspective will be refreshing to those who have struggled with traditional textbooks of gynecology, which ignore most of the issues of true importance to women's health. In addition, the book distinguishes itself because it is written primarily from the perspective of women providers who care deeply about women's health.

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Eating Disorders: The Facts, 4th Edition. Suzanne Abraham and Derek Llewellyn-Jones. Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 1996, 245 pp, \$17.95. ISBN 0-19-262759-7.

With some 20% to 25% of women aged 15 to 30 years showing signs of an eating disorder, getting out the facts about eating disorders is an important goal. The authors of *Eating Disorders: The Facts* attempt to provide "an authoritative resource on eating disorders and how to treat them, especially designed for sufferers and their families." Unfortunately, their book misses the mark.

The case studies about individuals with eating disorders that appear in the sections on anorexia and bulimia make for interesting reading. The paucity of treatment and self-help information found here, however, may leave readers who are struggling with these disorders feeling that they really know no more about how to overcome their problem than before they started reading this book. In addition, the authors' speculations about the connections between eating disorders and sexuality, in which they assign women with eating disorders to one of four categories of sexual behavior, would seem at best unenlightening and at worst demeaning and offensive. These women are often already ashamed and discouraged because of their symptoms and do not need further categorization.

The authors of *Eating Disorders: The Facts* are affiliated with the University of Australia, and the book may serve readers in other parts of the world somewhat more effectively than those in the United States. From a stylistic perspective, some examples and language used (eg, "sloth" describing lack of exercise in obesity) may be culture-specific and could seem heavy-handed to US readers. The descriptions of inpatient treatment also do not accurately reflect

the options available to most patients in the United States.

On a more minor note, there are several problems in this edition. There are incorrect page references and there is material referred to but left out of the final text. This can be distracting and confusing to the reader. One would expect more careful editing, especially given the \$17.95 price tag attached to this little book.

One valuable aspect of the book is the authors' contention that patients with eating disorders need our compassion and support to help them in the overwhelmingly difficult process of conquering their problems. Our patients may have a better start with one of the following books: *Bulimia: A Guide to Recovery*, (rev ed), by Lindsey Hall and Leigh Cohn (Carlsbad, Calif: Gurze Books, 1992), and *The Deadly Diet: Recovering from Anorexia and Bulimia*, (2nd ed), by Terence Sandbek (Oakland, Calif: New Harbinger Publications, 1993).

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