

BOOKS

Excellent guide for those involved in developing audit culture

'Principles for best practice in clinical audit', by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence. Pp x+196. Price £29.95. Oxford: Radcliffe Medical Press; 2002. ISBN 1 85775 976 1.

This publication, launched jointly by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence and the Commission for Health Improvement and funded by NICE, aims to support health care staff in strengthening clinical audit within the National Health Service. The impetus for its compilation is Government's clear focus on clinical audit in the wake of the Kennedy report, and the ramifications of that inquiry into children's heart surgery in Bristol resonate in the foreword by Dame Deirdre Hine and Sir Michael Rawlins. To paraphrase, the time has come indeed for everyone in the NHS to take clinical audit seriously.

To what extent does this book meet the challenge? The text provides statements of principle about clinical audit that could guide both the organisation and the individual — in particular, those striving to ensure that audit uses appropriate methods and takes place in a climate where there is a willingness to respond to its findings. A strength of the book is that it makes no assumptions, definitions are provided (including clinical audit itself) and every chapter commences with key points from a review of the literature. For the hard-pressed reader, important terms are defined in the glossary. Each chapter addresses a stage in the clinical audit process, from preparing for audit through to sustaining improvement, and is extensively referenced. In addition, 11 appendices give additional reference material to support local audit programmes and this comprehensive package is rounded off by the inclusion of a CD-ROM containing all the resources associated with the book.

This is an excellent book for those charged with developing the audit culture and for those who educate others on the principles of clinical audit. The text is accessible and written in a manner not to alienate the novice, but the balance of chapters (few) to appendices (many) distinguishes the content from that found in a user manual. However, any hint of criticism based on the latter point would be unjustified, particularly as a recognised handbook of clinical audit already exists. Overall, 'Principles for best practice in clinical audit' is a welcome and valuable guide to placing audit at the centre of clinical governance.

David Webb

Textbook on diseases has useful information that is easily accessible

'Handbook of pharmacy healthcare: diseases and patient advice', 2nd edition, edited by Robin J. Harman and Pamela Mason. Pp ix+604. Price £39.95. London: Pharmaceutical Press; 2002. ISBN 0 85369 507 5

Twelve years have passed between the publication of the first and second editions of this textbook. In its revision, the aim remains the same in that "it is designed to provide a comprehensive but concise account of a wide range of diseases for which medicines are prescribed or for which non-prescription medicines are bought (OTC) and to help pharmacists to apply that knowledge to the benefit and care of patients".

The editors and contributors achieve this aim by subdividing the text into two principal parts. The first part, fundamentals of disease, provides a dictionary of monographs that defines the disease, its aetiology, symptoms and management. The diseases are classified to be compatible with the classification of body systems used in the British National Formulary and thereby Part A contains 13 chapters, in just over 300 pages, beginning with the gastrointestinal disorders and concluding with skin disorders.

Part B, patient advice, focuses in the first half on the needs of special patient groups, including older people, children and pregnant women (new for this edition). It then moves on to include chapters on interpersonal skills, identification and management of minor illness, and diagnostic procedures (also new for the second edition) about which patients might expect pharmacists to be able to provide advice. Part B concludes with a useful list of contacts for professional and self-help organisations.

Parts C and D provide a quick reference guide that would help establish the possible causes of symptoms presented by patients in the pharmacy and a glossary of medical terms, respectively. Overall, although other books are available that provide more depth in relation to the topics covered, this remains a good reference source for preregistration trainees and postgraduate pharmacists to have at hand since it contains much useful information that is easily accessible.

Patricia Black

An essential reference book for preregistration trainees and pharmacy students alike

'Pharmacy practice', 3rd edition, by Patricia Stone and Stephen J. Curtis. Pp xvii+355. Price £29.95. London: Pharmaceutical Press; 2002. ISBN 0 85369 482 6.

The latest edition of 'Pharmacy practice' will become an essential reference for pharmacy students and preregistration trainees. It will become synonymous with the all-embracing pharmacists' role as a health care professional. However, this was not my first impression as I was discouraged by the extensive glossary of abbreviations, and with trepidation I attempted to read the text. My concern was without foundation since the explanations within the text were more than adequate and generously supplemented with website addresses for further information where applicable.

The book is split into three parts, the first being medicines and the patient, where information ranges from product development to the role of the health care professional in both primary and secondary care. The introduction in this edition of a chapter devoted to primary care pharmacy was essential to make this a complete reference for pharmaceutical care providers.

The second section deals with management of resources, quality and audit. Here the problems associated with employment legislation are clearly explained. In addition the problems of standards of care and financial implications are explored.

The final section is an overview of health care organisation in the United Kingdom giving a breakdown of the structure of the National Health Service and the changes from its inception in 1948.

Because of the fluctuating nature of the NHS and the associated problems this poses for health care professionals, I believe this book will be invaluable to those who have little knowledge of these issues and also will encourage more active participation in developing pharmaceutical roles from those with a wider long-term experience of pharmacy.

Dawn Belcher

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