

BOOKS

## Valuable addition to literature on economic evaluation, relevant to NHS decision making

*'Essentials of economic evaluation in healthcare', by Rachel Elliott and Katherine Payne. Pp xviii+235. Price £24.95. London: Pharmaceutical Press; 2005. ISBN 0 85369 523 7.*

This is a useful and comprehensive addition to the literature and a good, systematic guide to material of increasing importance in terms of policy making. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) is growing into its role of being the rationing agent for the NHS in England and Wales. Rationing or depriving patients of care from which they would benefit and which they desire is unavoidable and NICE's role is to make a critical appraisal of competing technologies to determine their relative cost effectiveness and suitability for reimbursement in the NHS. Their appraisal technique is economic evaluation.

After initial chapters on health economics and rationing, the authors examine the concepts of cost (the value of what is given up when a therapy is adopted) and benefit (the value of what is gained when a therapy is adopted) before providing three lucid chapters on cost-effectiveness analysis, cost-utility analysis and cost-benefit analysis. They then proceed to examine the use of decision analysis, the use of economic evaluation in decision making, statistical issues and valuing preferences.

All this is done with clarity, with each chapter having worked examples of issues covered, eg, the use of discounting, self-directed study exercises, references and further reading. The book is completed with a glossary and index.

Inevitably, there are some problems. For instance, while efficacy is defined in the text (p68), it is not included in the glossary. The discussion of bias in randomised controlled



trials might have offered more on statistical power issues and the creation of bias due to commercial perversion of trial design and reporting.

Although nothing in life is perfect, this is a valuable addition to the guidebook literature on economic evaluation. Hopefully, subsequent editions will maintain the clarity of presentation as the subject literature develops and becomes even more central to decision making in the NHS and every other health care system.

Alan Maynard

## Pharmaceutics textbook still useful, despite being based around US curriculum

*'Theory and practice of contemporary pharmaceutics', edited by Tapash K. Ghosh and Bhaskara R. Jasti. Pp 564. Price \$69.95. Florida: CRC Press LLC; 2005. ISBN 0 415 28863 0.*

This book is designed to link the principles of physical pharmacy with the practice of dosage form development. It fits into a conventional US undergraduate pharmacy curriculum, where courses in these areas of pharmaceutics are taught sequentially over a two-semester period. The other traditional components of pharmaceutics, biopharmaceutics and pharmacokinetics are not covered in this text.

Specifically, this book is aimed at the demands and expectations of the entry level PharmD programme (US undergraduate degree), with theory and application interspersed. The book attempts to respond to changes in the curriculum of the undergraduate pharmacy programme in recent years and meet the guidelines of the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education, with an emphasis on problem-based learning and critical thinking.

The book consists of 17 chapters divided into four lecture modules, with two modules accommodating each semester of the course. Each chapter is divided into sections composed of basic science, a self-evaluation section, practical problems and case studies. Information is presented in a way that emphasises the relevance of the science to the practising pharmacist.

Given the scope of the text, it is not surprising that the subject of physical pharmacy is not covered in as much depth as it is in books such as 'Physicochemical principles of pharmacy' (A. T. Florence and D. Attwood) and 'Physical pharmacy' (A. Martin). However, information is presented in a simple way and may be more appealing to students.

Although specifically designed with the US course in mind, this publication is a useful addition to the well-established pharmaceutics textbooks.

Anthony D'Emanuele

## New edition even more helpful in assisting with preparation of "specials"

*'Trissel's stability of compounded formulations' (3rd edition), Lawrence A. Trissel. Pp xi+496. Price \$99.95. Washington DC: American Pharmaceutical Association; 2005. ISBN 1 58212 067 6.*

This book is an attempt to present a precise, ready reference source for stability of compounded formulations. It is an improvement on the previous two editions and also contains an additional two useful appendices.

Prescriptions for extemporaneously prepared medicines ("specials") which pharmacists are asked to supply do not appear to be decreasing. The most frequently asked questions are, "Can we make a liquid form of this?" and "What is the shelf life?" Although not the only source of information, 'Trissel's stability of compounded formulations' is an essential book that will provide many of the answers to these questions.

The second edition is a well-thumbed book on my shelf and this third edition is a much needed update. It contains updated monographs on 355 products, an increase of over 75, arranged alphabetically by non-proprietary name. Each monograph is organised into three easy-to-use categories: "properties", "general stability" and "stability" reports of the compounded preparations. A fourth category, "Compatibility with other drug products" is included where information is available.

Two new useful appendices have been added: "Beyond-use dating for non-sterile compounded preparations" and "Beyond-use dating for sterile compounded preparations".

There is an index of non-proprietary and branded names.

This book is a valuable resource to support the "special needs of the patient".

Colin Ranshaw

## Pharmaceutical Press

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## Correction

The ISBN number listed for the book 'Essentials of economic evaluation in healthcare' was incorrect. The correct number is ISBN 0 85369 574 1.