

# Book review

**Non-Prescription Medicines. By ALAN NATHAN. pp400. Price £24.95. London: Pharmaceutical Press, 2002. ISBN 0 85369 506 7.**

Rachel Christopherson

**S**ince the NHS plan for pharmacy, launched in September 2000, more and more medicines have been reclassified from POM to P status, giving a wider range of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, and more freedom to community pharmacists in what they can supply to customers. Due to the increase in people going to pharmacies as their first port-of-call, for advice about minor ailments and possible treatments, it is important that pharmacists and indeed the whole health care team have up-to-date and good knowledge of non-prescription medicines.

Alan Nathan's 'Non-prescription medicines' is designed to deal with this issue. The book gives fairly detailed but easy to read and understandable information on all medicines available without a prescription. This is provided in alphabetically arranged sections of the conditions they are used to treat, from acne all the way to warts. For each

condition an explanation is given of what the condition is and what causes it. This is done on a level that is understandable to both the pharmacist and the pharmacy assistant. After this, the book goes on to give details on the treatments available over the counter. It explains the mode of action of each treatment, suggesting how the compound works to affect and deal with the condition. It also gives the dosage used (both adult dose and paediatric dose if available), any side effects, cautions and contraindications, presentations and formulations, and product examples (the name under which the compound is sold and most known to the general public). Perhaps the best part of each section is the concluding part, where the author outlines the points which must be considered when selecting a product so that the most effective treatment is chosen for the customer and offers a first choice recommendation using the key points previously outlined.

The second edition contains a completely new section on emergency hormonal contraception (EHC for short). This is a highly important part of the non-prescription group of medicines, since 2001 when a change of license has meant that pharmacists are allowed to sell a version of the progestogen-only

form of EHC, Levonelle-2, without a prescription. As well as the points on mode of action, dosage, side effects, interactions etc, other issues are raised giving valuable advice if a pharmacist were to encounter repeated, third party or advanced requests for EHC, and if they have moral objections to supply.

The book provides up-to-date information on all medicines available at a pharmacy without a prescription. It is perhaps a bit simple for the pharmacist who is used to getting their information from the BNF or Martindale, but nevertheless it provides the important information needed to effectively recommend an OTC medicine. It is ideal for anybody who needs clarification or better understanding of non-prescription medicines and who wants to read it in a clear and easy to understand manner. The health care assistant and other members of the health care team such as prescribing nurses would also benefit from this book.

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**Zoonoses. By MARTIN SHAKESPEARE. pp304. Price £29.95. London: Pharmaceutical Press, 2002. ISBN 0 85369 480 X.**

Chris Barnes

**W**hen I first received this book my first question was “What are zoonoses?” I thought it must be some weird and exotic organism that I may learn about in a distant corner of my degree course. How wrong could I be?

I only had to read the first few pages until I found a concise depiction in plain, understandable English. Zoonoses are “those diseases and infections which are naturally transmitted between vertebrate animals and man.” The understanding and knowledge of zoonoses is a core part of any health care professional’s knowledge and this book provides a perfect, compact companion from which to gain expertise about such relevant conditions.

The book is clear and concise and quite cleverly laid out. Each chapter encompasses a wide topic area and is broken down into several sections. These cover general details such as background

information, the transmission of the disease, the disease state in humans, diagnoses, ideal and preferred treatments and different types of drug prophylaxis. The book also covers probably the most important part of health education; that is preventing zoonose infection.

From a student point of view, this book is an excellent revision tool as it deals with zoonoses in a clear, easy to understand manner. Relevant information is highlighted, while test cases allow the application of new found wisdom in real life situations.

At the end of the book, there is an important chapter on disease prevention, strategies and appendices in which you are encouraged to read around the subject. Extensive lists of information sources are listed along with both self-test and web resources.

I feel that this book is a very well constructed and informative. It’s a student friendly resource that I feel would benefit any student studying a health care discipline degree. Fantastic!

Chris Barnes is a first year MPharm student at the University of Bradford

**Pharmaceutical Statistics. By DAVID JONES. pp608. Price £29.95. London: Pharmaceutical Press, 2002. ISBN 0 85369 425 7.**

Chris Barnes

**I**n the ever changing world of pharmaceutical research, statistics is of paramount importance, both to the undergraduate and to the experienced pharmaceutical scientist alike. Statistics provide useful tools to allow the understanding of gathered raw data, allow this data to be processed and to allow this data to be refined and quantified effectively.

The teaching of statistics for students of a science discipline is often a demanding task and this book has realised what a challenge this can be. Often, the subject is viewed as merely a barrier to the successful completion of a lab report by students.

The book is divided into two distinct but complementary sections. The first section covers a variety of basic statistics useful to all aspects of pharmaceutical sciences. These include such diverse tools as probability theory, analysis and distribution as well as much more. The second section details approaches by

which statistical methods of analysis may be mathematically executed and initiated. It also covers the methods by which these methods may be applied to actual situations.

As helpful as this book may be, and I believe it will be helpful for any student; there is no getting away from the fact that it is a mathematical text book!

A quick flick through the pages reveals page upon page of text which is daunting in appearance and can seem a little scary upon first look. I personally found that I was unable to quickly look up a particular method or equation without reading two or three pages of background explanation and text.

Although this won't be the most stimulating book on your shelf, overall this is a sound and trustworthy companion to any student or practitioner.

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**Complementary Therapies for Pharmacists. By STEVEN KAYNE. pp448. Price £24.95, London: Pharmaceutical Press, 2002. ISBN: 0 85369 430 3**

Andy Christopherson

**W**hether you like them or not, the fact is that complementary medicines are becoming an increasingly large part of the community pharmacy world. More and more patients and practitioners are turning to herbal medicines, homoeopathy, flower remedies and other alternatives to orthodox therapy. Whether complementary medicines are gaining popularity because they are seen as a

more 'natural' form of treatment or due to a falling level of confidence in regular drugs is not clear, but the fact remains that the modern pharmacist, and hence, pharmacy student, has to be up to date and confident enough to offer patients the best advice and treatment.

Unfortunately, complementary medicines form a minor part of the pharmacy undergraduate degree at best and preregistration trainees and pharmacists are often ill-equipped to advise the public on these alternative therapies. Today, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain requires that pharmacists only give advice on complementary medicines if they undergo training or possess specialised knowledge.

'Complementary therapies for pharmacists' goes some way to address this. Written by Dr Steven Kayne, a highly respected expert in the field, the book is split into four distinct sections. The first is an introduction to complementary and alternative medicine (CAM); its basic concepts; the demand, practise and delivery of CAM and the provision of evidence for CAM and its integration into the British health care system.

Moving on, the next, and largest, section of the book gets down to the basics and looks at CAM in the pharmacy environment. The four most popular therapies: homoeopathy, medicinal herbalism, aromatherapy and flower remedies; are covered in some detail. General background information, a definition and detailed history is given before delving into looking at the therapy in a modern pharmacy practice. Scientific proof and the evidence behind the mystique of complementary medicines is examined carefully, which is perhaps the most important aspect from a pharmacist's point of view. The manner of the book is practical and the advice given is down-to-earth and easy to use. Common examples of remedies to counter prescribe are given along

with a list references and further information.

The last two sections of the book look at traditional ethnic therapies and other CAM disciplines. Traditional Chinese medicine and Indian ayurvedic medicine are examined and discussed. Disciplines such as massage, reflexology, chiropractic therapies and remedies as diverse as colour and crystal therapy are also looked at.

A very important section looks at the integration of ethnic and traditional medicines with orthodox western medicines. The relevance of this cannot be understated as many patients are choosing complementary therapies to complement their GP prescribed courses of treatment. Also more practitioners are looking at incorporating alternative therapies with their orthodox treatments. With the possibility of herbalism, homoeopathy and other treatments becoming more accessible on the NHS, complementary and alternative therapies will play an even bigger role in the pharmacy than they do currently.

'Complementary therapies for pharmacists' is not so much a textbook as a well-referenced source book of up-to-date information. It is both an excellent starting point and fantastic reference source for both pharmacy students and pharmacists. The pharmacist's role in the provision and prescribing of complementary medicines will increase in the future and this book is a vital addition to the library of any future health care professional. ✕

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president of the British  
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