

Boeke/Books

Valuable distillations of other people's experiences

How To Do It. Vol. 3. Pp. x + 203. Illustrated. £9 (including postage by air). London: BMJ. 1990. (Also available from Librigrer Book Distributors, Bloemfontein.)

For some time now, the *British Medical Journal* has been carrying articles on 'How to do it'. These are then put together into booklet form, and the third one has just made its appearance.

The value of these distillations of other people's experiences can hardly be over-emphasised. This edition carries advice on such disparate topics as how to communicate with cancer patients, how to survive a dinner, how to get publicity, how to please an editor, how to be a manager, and how to write the annual report of the Director of Public Health.

The style of writing is eminently readable and the information is delivered in a reader-friendly style. In terms of sheer value for money, this booklet could hardly be bettered. Highly recommended.

Medical dictionary

Concise Medical Dictionary. 3rd ed. Ed. By Elizabeth A. Martin. Pp. 1-759. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1990.

Compilers of medical dictionaries have a daunting task these days when new technical terms proliferate at what appears to be an hourly rate. This means that many dictionaries are out of date before they are distributed. However, as a dictionary which is intended primarily for paramedical staff, such as nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists and others, the pressure for linguistic innovation is not quite so great. What is needed for that particular market is a dictionary which carries all the words which they need in a format which allows for easy reference. Compiled by a distinguished team of practising specialists and medical writers, this dictionary, now in its third edition, is a winner. Practising doctors should ensure that even if it is not on their own bookshelf, it should certainly be on their secretary's.

N. C. Lee

Paediatric cardiology

Prevention in Childhood and Youth of Adult Cardiovascular Diseases: Time for Action. Ed. by WHO Expert Committee. Pp. 1 - 105. Illustrated. Sw. Fr. 12. Geneva: WHO. 1990.

This technical report of the World Health Organisation indicates an important way in which paediatric cardiology is moving today. Now that the problems of valvular heart disease are becoming less important in many parts of the world and congenital heart disease is being treated increasingly effectively by cardiac surgery, a major part of paediatric cardiology is how to apply the concepts of risk factor prevention at an early stage. In a country such as South Africa where we know that cigarette smoking continues to be a major health hazard and, if anything, is increasing, the lessons learnt by the World Health Organisation should be applied. In addition, the question of dietary changes is important.

It should be noted that the sale of cigarettes to minors should be prohibited, whereas in South Africa it is permitted. The sponsorship of sports events by cigarette manufacturers should also not be allowed and special anti-smoking campaigns should be launched.

This book poses formidable challenges for paediatricians and public health experts in South Africa.

Lionel H. Opie

Contraceptive safety

Safety Requirements for Contraceptive Steroids. Ed. by F. Michal. Pp. xv - 467. Illustrated. £65,00. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1989.

Contraceptive steroids have probably been subject to more intensive scrutiny than any other drugs used in medical practice and quite rightly so, since they are used by millions of well women worldwide, often for prolonged periods.

This publication is the outcome of a Symposium on Improving Safety Requirements for Contraceptive Steroids convened by the WHO Special Programme of Research Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction, Geneva 1989.

The guidelines examine the current approaches to the evaluation of new steroidal contraceptive drugs and summarise in the form of recommendations ways for their improvement. They stress the vital need for toxicological and clinical assessment in well-selected animal models and specifically designed clinical tests. In addition, post-registration surveillance of the drugs is strongly recommended.

This is not a book for the casual reader but will be a valuable asset for drug regulation agencies, pharmaceutical companies and organisations working in the field of population and human reproduction.

M. E. Moss

Psychiatry

Textbook of Psychiatry. Ed. by P. J. V. Beumont and R. B. Hampshire. Pp. x + 520. Illustrated. Price £29,50. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1989.

This multi-authored Australian textbook on psychiatry is aimed at medical students and registrars in psychiatry as well as other health workers involved in psychiatry. The preface states that it is 'short and comprehensive' — it is the latter, but not the former. In general, individual topics are dealt with concisely, the book is well laid out and reads easily, which is a tribute to the editors since multi-authored texts are often inconsistent in this respect. The purview of the book is large — in fact, it encompasses most fields in psychiatry — even some esoteric ones such as feminism and the mental health of aboriginals. It includes useful chapters on the basic sciences relative to psychiatry, such as neurochemistry, genetics and neuroendocrinology. One could, however, have wished for more in certain areas, particularly child psychiatry.

Overall, however, it is a very satisfactory book — a 'feet on the ground' text which is very Australian in its pragmatism and practicality. Both are useful attributes at the present state of knowledge in psychiatry.

L. S. Gillis