

the patient's skin? I think that family physicians are in a position of understanding my excitement for this little book ($5\frac{1}{2}\times 7\frac{1}{2}\times \frac{3}{4}$), since they pride themselves in giving comprehensive continuous care to patients regardless of sex, age, or diseased organ.

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Exploring Rural Medicine: Current Issues and Concepts

edited by Barbara P. Yawn, Angeline Bushy, and Roy A. Yawn, 332 pp, \$49.95 (softcover, \$24.95), ISBN 0-8039-4851-4 (softcover, ISBN 0-8039-4852-2), Thousand Oaks, Calif, SAGE Publications Inc, 1994.

This book presents a collection of articles about rural medicine by 25 authors on a variety of topics. The work is intended for students and residents who are aspiring to a rural practice and for physicians who are already practicing in rural locations. There are 22 chapters that cover an assortment of topics that are likely to interest future or current rural practitioners. The print is of reasonable size and good quality. There are no illustrations or graphs, but one will find many useful tables. As I read the volume, several grammatical and proofing errors were noted; however, the material is generally quite readable.

The chapters appear to have been selected to represent topics that are thought to be of concern to rural physicians. Starting with a general discussion of the unique nature of rural practice, both historically and in the future, the editors then selected articles dealing with obstetrical problems in rural women and with treatment of the ill newborn, including infants with bronchopulmonary dysplasia. The opening chapter presents a thoughtful discussion of the unique

nature of rural practice, although much of the material clearly reflects the opinions of the author. While the chapter on obstetrics briefly discusses the special problems faced by physicians providing prenatal care and deliveries in rural settings, the two chapters on problems experienced by the newborn do not focus on the concerns of dealing with these issues in a rural setting. Indeed, the failure of the authors to approach their subjects from the novel vantage point of rural physicians remains an unfortunately recurrent problem throughout the edition, with the exception of brief "rurally representative" comments that sometimes appear at the end of a chapter. I wondered if all the authors had experienced rural practice and were personally cognizant of its nature.

The format of chapter selection seems to follow the patient or family life cycle, because the next section is a useful literature review of adolescent pregnancies in rural areas. Adult problems, including mental health, environmental hazards, and trauma, follow in sequence. A practical article on the use of thrombolytic agents for treatment of acute myocardial infarction in a rural setting is the next inclusion. A potentially useful discussion of women's health issues became an overly brief review, without a significant focus on the aspects of these problems in rural areas. The treatment of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome in the rural setting is reviewed, followed by the presentation of material on end-of-life issues, including the treatment of terminal cancer and dying patients. The last several chapters in the publication deal with practice process and practice management issues. An interesting chapter on health maintenance unfortunately failed to deal with the unusual problems that the rural physician faces in this area owing to the nature of the patients who compose the practice. The chapter on cultural competency presents a very rational, though opinionated, review of the unique cultural issues found in ru-

ral areas. Lastly, there are valuable discussions on ethics, quality assessment, and living through professional liability litigation in rural practice.

As a former rural practitioner, I found *Exploring Rural Medicine: Current Issues and Concepts* to be both an encouraging and a frustrating work. Students aspiring to rural careers and the rural practitioner are in desperate need of a comprehensive text of all areas seen in primary care written from a rural practitioner's viewpoint and a small volume that discusses the special nature, problems, patients, and character of rural practice. This book is neither. In some areas, it strives to be the former (eg, chapter 7, "Adolescent Pregnancies in Rural America: A Review of the Literature and Strategies for Prevention"), while in others it almost succeeds at accomplishing parts of the latter (eg, chapter 1, "Rural Medical Practice: Present and Future"). This attempt to fill these gaping niches in rural medical literature is extremely encouraging, but the failure to accomplish either task is frustrating. Several excellent chapters begin with a discussion of the essential problems affecting rural practice, and several other chapters begin with high-quality, in-depth reviews of specific areas of concern; however, neither task is pursued to completion. The authors of several chapters seem to have forgotten that they were writing about rural medicine, because they fail to mention it in their material. In other chapters, unsuccessful attempts are made to deal with huge (and worthy) subject areas in a highly condensed and summarized fashion. Intermingled with these disappointments are several superb articles providing excellent insight into and thoughtful discussion of rural practice and problems.

Finally, in spite of my concerns about this edition, it is recommended to each aspiring and rural primary care provider. The paucity of useful current works in this area, coupled with the high quality of several chapters of this book, make "finding the pearls" a rational use of

the reader's time. One hopes that the need for a comprehensive text and a quality synopsis about rural practice will eventually be fulfilled. Until then, we must use the best parts of the material available to us.

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Occupational Medicine

3rd ed, edited by Carl Zenz, O. Bruce Dickerson, and Edward P. Horvath, 1316 pp, with illus, \$149, ISBN 0-8016-6676-7, St Louis, Mo, Mosby-Year Book Inc, 1994.

This comprehensive textbook, edited by Zenz, Dickerson, and Horvath, is the third edition of what is considered by many to be the standard reference for occupational physicians. It represents a traditional approach with a disease and exposure focus. Also, it extensively covers administrative issues in occupational medicine. This reference text is particularly useful for primary care physicians who either frequently see work-related conditions and/or have a formal relationship with one or more employers.

Several parts and chapters are particularly useful to family physicians. Part 1, titled "Clinical Factors," includes three chapters of major relevance. Chapter 2, "Role of the Primary Care Physician in Occupational Medicine," includes topics of ethical dilemmas, the implications of the Americans With Disabilities Act, specialty referral criteria for difficult cases, and drug screening. These issues present themselves often in family practice and may produce anxiety in the primary care physician who is uncertain of how to manage them. For example, the Americans With Disabilities Act requires physicians to pay much more attention to fitting the worker-patient back into the work environment than was the case in the

past. Another chapter, which describes epidemiologic practice, is concise, brief, and very useful to family physicians, regardless of their involvement with occupational cases. For example, the interpretation of seminal health-event cases is explained in relation to their clues to possible larger occupational disease outbreaks. Related to this is a description of how to approach small clusters of diseases in the workplace, with clues to determine significant excess.

Two major parts of the book are titled "The Physical Occupational Environment" and the "Chemical Occupational Environment." Noise-induced hearing loss is covered in the physical environment section and is contained in a must-read chapter. It is an excellent summary of noise exposure, pathological outcomes, physiology, epidemiology, clinical factors, impairment assessment, prevention, and regulation. These are issues that family practitioners must be aware of, not only because noise-induced hearing loss is the most common of all occupational illnesses, but also because this condition is compensable and is often confused with the diagnosis of presbycusis. The chemical environment section discusses specific compounds, chemicals, and metals (eg, carbon monoxide, fluorides, and lead) and more general categories of exposures (eg, pesticides). The many chapters on the physical and chemical occupational environment provide excellent quick references for the practicing physician who is not only confronting these exposures and their resultant diseases but also is being asked general questions about possible harmful exposures.

Part 6, titled "Behavioral Considerations," is highlighted by a chapter on the assessment of mental stress factors at work. It discusses a model of work stress management in Finland and provides an outstanding overview not only of the magnitude of the problem but also of the aspects of stress prevention and management. Part 7, titled "Fundamental Disciplines and Related Activities for Prevention and

Control," is highlighted by a chapter describing the role of the occupational health nurse, emphasizing the fact that the occupational health nurse is the sole health care provider for many workplaces, especially those with fewer than 500 employees. These small-sized work sites employ the vast majority of American workers. Consequently, the occupational health nurse is often the first point of contact for the family physician who needs or desires to interface with the workplace. It is therefore critical that family physicians understand the roles and practices of occupational health nurses.

Occupational Medicine has many strengths as a reference text. It is well written and comprehensive. It includes many excellent illustrations, not only of data summaries but also of exemplary forms that can be used in the practice of occupational medicine. A vast number and diversity of contributors are used, representing a blend of academics and experienced practitioners. These contributors come from many countries and are able to share the experiences of occupational medicine throughout many parts of the world.

Several shortcomings are also noteworthy. Minimal attention is paid to the issues of public health and prevention, although these topics are modestly subsumed in various chapters. Environmental medical issues are almost totally ignored. This is particularly significant since the occupational medicine movement in the United States has recently encompassed environmental medicine, as exemplified by the recent name change of the American Academy of Occupational Medicine to the American Academy of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. The editors have updated a textbook that, more than ever, will serve as a key reference for family physicians who regularly care for working patients.

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