

## BOOK REVIEWS

**The Diary of a Teenage Health Freak.** By Aidan MacFarlane and Ann McPherson. (Pp 154; £2.99 paperback.) Oxford University Press, 1991. ISBN 0-19-286083-6.

I am at the age where I can tolerate most adults and in a job which has taught me to enjoy most children. I'm also at that point in family life where I wish that there was nothing in between the two extremes of existence.

Aidan MacFarlane and Ann McPherson must be much more tolerant. Taking a leaf out of Sue Townsend's Adrian Mole format, they have produced a health education guide for teenagers cunningly disguised as a hypochondriac's daily diary. I gave it to two teenagers consecutively to write the review for me; neither would take time off long enough from fixedly gazing at a TV screen to do so. I have therefore been forced to read something written in language acceptable to 15 year olds. Me, an Oxbridge graduate with 'O' level Latin and deeply held prejudices about the slow death of the English tongue. I don't know Ann McPherson but her coauthor is a working colleague and had always struck me as a perfectly decent sort of individual, despite his attachment to a lap-top at all times. He, for one, therefore deserves boundless praise for having to live with ranges of penile length and all the street names for commonly used illegal drugs for however long this book gestated.

All books dealing with a foreign species need interpreters, as the best anthropologists well know. The authors credit 4th year pupils in two Oxfordshire schools, their hard pressed teachers, and their own six children (separately, that is, not together) and their friends, who 'often surprised us and sometimes horrified us by their revelations concerning sex, drugs, alcohol, divorce and much else besides'.

*The Diary of a Teenage Health Freak* merits the best seller list. Teenagers continually surprise me by the depth of confusion and desire for knowledge, lurking underneath apparently impenetrable hostility and arrogance, especially about matters to do with their bodies and with health.

Most health education is not written in teenage-friendly language and when it is it tends to be condescending. MacFarlane and McPherson avoid both these pitfalls. The style is sufficiently engaging to hook the toughest of adolescents and the messages slip in non-threateningly. If you are over 20 it's a lot less readable than *Viz* magazine but it's a worthy present for any relative or acquaintance aged 12 to 16 and there's always the hope that older thugs and layabouts might light on it by chance.

It would look well on the shelves of the ward adolescent unit library and any reader of *Archives* who is responsible for producing health education literature locally would do well to study its style.

HARVEY MARCOVITCH  
*Consultant paediatrician*

**Pediatric Outpatient Procedures.** Edited by Jacob A Lohr. (Pp 383; \$49.50 hardback.) J B Lippincott Company, 1991. ISBN 0-397-50897-2.

If you are into mediaeval torture, read on. This comprehensive approach to investigative and therapeutic techniques specialises in methods of restraint. The most alarming of these is the commercially available strapping for the restraint of the child undergoing gastric lavage (fig 23-3). That it is practical I have no doubt but I am concerned about the punitive nature of the treatment. Whether this should be an outpatient procedure at all is also questionable.

However, brutality aside, the book is an extremely useful aid to paediatricians, paediatric nurses, and general practitioners. It clearly outlines the indications and contraindications for just about any outpatient procedure you may need including an excellent chapter on resuscitation and one on dental procedures. For each procedure it then lists the equipment necessary and gives a detailed description of the method with a final comment on possible complications. This book is very user friendly and all written descriptions are backed up by clear diagrams or photographs.

I was surprised that there was no mention of jejunal biopsy in the gastroenterology section but I am sure that this is a reflection of how rare coeliac disease is in North America. I think that ear piercing could have been omitted as I know no one in this country with the time or inclination to pop a couple of studs into a child's ears in outpatients! There are several procedures in this book which are underused in this country and may be of great benefit in certain circumstances. Intraosseous infusion is one such example. This is a simple and safe way of giving fluids to a shocked child and avoids wasting precious time looking for veins.

Although, as the editor states, nothing can replace the 'see one, do one, teach one', approach we all know that there are times when one of those three vital steps is missing from our training. I know that I shall find this book useful not only as a reminder before undertaking the less common practical procedures but also to ensure that I teach procedures accurately. In fact I feel that every paediatric casualty and day care department should have a copy.

SUSAN LAURENT  
*Paediatric senior registrar*

**Adolescent Medicine.** By Victor C Strasburger and Robert T Brown. Churchill Livingstone, 1991. (Pp 569; £29.95 paperback) ISBN 0-316-81872-0.

Is adolescence really necessary? The authors think not, but that it is a 'culture phenomenon' of Western society not found in primitive communities (see page 400). Do we need a textbook of adolescent medicine?

This practical book is written by two American paediatricians both of whom head divisions of adolescent medicine. There are sections on normal growth and development, the adolescent's initial interview, common medical problems, the adolescent with chronic illness or disability, sex, adolescent sports medicine, adolescent psychology and substance abuse, with a short section on related legal issues in America.

Despite the book's conciseness there are familiar throw away insights—why do 13 year old girls at college dances go to the 'bathroom'

(American for toilet) four at a time? The section on the initial interview with its boxes (page 31) is very welcome to all of us confronted by a sullen teenager in a busy clinic. The adolescent's need for confidentiality, dignity, and relative freedom to consent is emphasised throughout and is rather different from the conventional paediatric approach, although it is in line with the spirit of our new Children Act. The account of chronic fatigue (ME) syndrome is the best I have seen anywhere, giving clear criteria for diagnosis. Acne and sexually transmitted diseases are presented in an unusually accessible manner. The chapter on the adolescent growing up with chronic disability was thought provoking. Contraception, not home ground for most paediatricians, is well discussed. Strangely, the teenage mother is not mentioned.

The style is didactic and selective. The section on adolescent psychology settles for the normal, suicide, depression, acting out, psychosomatic disorders, and disturbances of eating. This is a practical book, easy to access with many lists and tables. There is an occasional black and white diagram and flow charts for management. References are plentiful, mainly American and up to 1990, and are separate from the lists of suggestions for further reading.

The book does not define adolescence. Any chronic condition imposing lifestyle restrictions is liable to be stormy in adolescence, so it is surprising to see no mention of coeliac disease, cystic fibrosis, or metabolic disorders. Diabetes mellitus was well covered, although there was little that related specifically to adolescence.

I know of no other book which covers this field so succinctly. It does achieve its stated aims of being 'a time-saving review of the most common adolescent conditions' which is practical and immediately available. It should be useful to a range of doctors and others meeting adolescents in the health service. Perhaps there is an even greater need of this book in this country where there is so little in the way of specialised facilities for adolescents. It encourages doctors as well as parents to be accessible, accepting and available, but not overinvolved or possessive.

GERALD McENERY  
*Consultant paediatrician*

**Ambulatory Pediatrics.** Edited by Morris Green and Robert J Haggerty. (Pp 651; £41 hardback.) W B Saunders Company, 1990. ISBN 0-7216-4240-3.

It makes a pleasant change to read a book that concentrates on the outpatient care of children, as so many paediatricians spend much of their working time in the clinic. Although this book is intended for the North American office paediatrician, there is much of interest to the doctors working with children this side of the Atlantic.

Many new chapters have been included in this fourth edition such as maternal depression, adolescent risk taking, physical fitness, AIDS, the impact of chronic illness on siblings, and home care. The text is divided into five sections and 116 chapters from half to 20 pages in length, with few illustrations. There are over 100 contributors. The theme is adaptation and each section relates to a different kind of adaptation. This makes things unnecessarily obscure and simpler