and political structures. This book is refreshingly written from a non-medical but health-oriented angle. It could help us make community-oriented health care a reality in the next century, even amongst deprived populations.

CARL WHITEHOUSE  
Professor of Teaching Medicine in the Community, University of Manchester

Rural health issues have recently received increasing attention in the United Kingdom after years of neglect. Rural Healthcare lays claim to be the first textbook of rural medicine in the UK. The two editors, Jim Cox and Iain Mungall, are well known for their passionate concern about rural health issues. Together with nine other writers they have produced a book which is generally readable despite writing styles varying from the discursive and anecdotal to the heavily referenced. Inevitably there is an emphasis on the British administrative and legislative framework.

Some aspects of rural healthcare are well covered, e.g. access to care, communications, teamwork, dispensing, rural poverty and deprivation, continuing professional development and community hospitals. Even though parts of these chapters have a UK flavour, the concepts are easily transferable to other health care systems.

Where is there room for improvement? The first substantive chapter is an overview of diseases selected because they are more common in rural areas. The author gives a good summary of zoonoses and their management. However, it is difficult to understand why he included Helicobacter infection when he acknowledges that there is no evidence of an increased or occupational risk.

One major deficiency of the book is the minimal attention paid to the marine environment, a significant part of the rural economy (occupational and recreational) in some parts of the country. Apart from a partial account of fish farming, there is little indication of the occupational diseases and injuries of divers and fishermen. The chapter by a vet on animal diseases is good but does not cover diseases of poultry or of farmed marine species.

The chapter on emergencies includes certain types of trauma, but ignores recreational trauma, e.g. winter sports, climbing, potholing, water sports; these are all emergencies confronting rural GPs. Problems of evacuation are not well addressed, and the use of lifeboats, helicopters and air ambulances does not feature in the book. Rural pre-hospital care often means beginning secondary care in the community, but there is little practical guidance on this and it is difficult to understand why myocardial infarction is the only medical emergency covered in detail.

No doubt increased interest in rural healthcare should stimulate research. The short chapter on research would have been improved by reference to the specifically rural context and by indicating potential areas for research. This book is an interesting introduction to many aspects of British rural healthcare. Hopefully, others will follow.

ROBERT J DICKIE  
GP, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, Scotland


“The fundamental objective of paediatrics is to guide children safely and happily through childhood . . .” (James Hughes MD). This quote, taken from the introduction to Chapter 3 of this beautifully presented book, can as well be directed to the readers of this text. Although written specifically for medical students, this book guides its reader through the normal growth and development of children, to cope succinctly with the acute and common ailments of childhood, before addressing the more distressing, chronic difficulties with which some children, their parents and surrounding society have to cope.

The chapters are colour coded and are headed by enchanting or illustrative quotations. There are clear diagrams and tables to summarize and illustrate the text. The ‘At a glance’ summary presentations are a superb aid to student and registrar learning. There is clear guidance on the specific details of history and examination of children, including ophthalmology and ENT, and a well-written section on the ethics and legal problems associated with the care of children. Many of the common problems that present in general practice are not addressed in the older conventional medical tomes. This book provides clear sensible advice (albeit too didactic) about such problems as food fads, toddlers who won’t eat and children who won’t sleep.

This book is designed to be dipped into; its ordering both by chapter and the subjects within the chapters is illogical. Normal adolescence is slotted between Chronic Medical Problems and Clinical Investigations; urinary tract infections are dealt with in the middle of meningitis and meningococcal septicaemia! The unequal weight given to particular topics reflects, I suspect, the authors’ biases rather than clinical impact; breast feeding, for example, covers four columns, compared with one column for bottle feeding and its attendant problems.

Some topics, e.g. cystic fibrosis, coeliac disease and Still’s disease, are dealt with in the Common Complaints of Childhood chapter, whereas in reality they and their implications fit better into the section about Chronic Medical Conditions. Child abuse, which seems rife in our
society, is dealt with relatively briefly in Child Health Surveillance and does not get a mention in the chapter on emotional and behavioural problems. Despite these reservations, this book provides a clear guide to general paediatrics from birth to adulthood. At £25 it is well priced relative to other similar-sized books and certainly deserves a place.

CLaire Samuel
Part-time GP in Leeds, Yorkshire


The subject of men’s health is becoming fashionable, a possible reaction to the previous emphasis on women’s health and the many books devoted to that topic. Of course, in reality, much of the medical literature is related to health and illness in men, particularly with regard to cardiovascular and respiratory disease. Rather than approaching the subject from a disease-orientated angle, this book focuses on a broader picture of the life men lead and their susceptibility to various conditions. It is a welcome addition to the Oxford General Practice Series and complements nicely the volume on women’s health.

There are many well-known and distinguished contributors including GPs such as Anne McPherson and Hugh Bethell, academic GPs and doctors from the public health and occupational health fields. Overall, the text is readable and well referenced and covers high-profile areas such as domestic violence and suicide as well as family planning and unemployment.

The chapter on reproductive health, which concentrates on the areas of family planning and infertility, is an especially useful and illuminating treatment of this topic, which all too often is relegated to a few paragraphs in gynaecological texts. Unfortunately the companion chapter on sexual problems in men falls foul of the time lag between writing and publishing. There is no mention of Viagra and the controversy regarding its prescription; a pity because this chapter is otherwise excellent, including a selection of interesting case studies.

The mental health of men and psychiatric conditions such as depression and drug abuse are not given a chapter to themselves but rather are interspersed amongst other chapters. However, there is a whole chapter devoted to men and alcohol. One part of the book, in three sections, concentrates on the stages of life, a useful method of discussing such topics as men as husbands, men as fathers and men’s friendships. Occupational health and the problems of unemployment are well described.

There are a few minor omissions. I would have liked to see more emphasis placed on the role and nature of exercise over and above its benefits for hypertension and patients with ischaemic heart disease. There is no reference in the index to sport, yet sports injuries are a common reason for young men to seek medical help. The final chapter on seeking help includes innovations in and recommendations for improving healthcare in men and draws the whole text to a satisfying conclusion.

Jill E Thistlethwaite
GP and Senior Lecturer in Community-Based Teaching in Leeds


In such a rapidly advancing speciality the author is a rare bird indeed—he is one of the few GPs to write a book in an area so commonly the province of consultant orthopaedic surgeons and rheumatologists. It is this perspective which makes this book a pleasure to read as well as informative on those clinical areas which the GP will see commonly in his practice, regardless of any particular interest in sports medicine itself.

The author begins with a fascinating perspective of sport and its place in history. He quotes some of the studies of the last century, which centred mainly on rowing and the University Boat Race. They attempted to prove (or disprove) vague theories of long life and good health in those men who took part in sport at what was then the pinnacle of achievement.

For those practitioners who do take up the many jobs on offer as part-time unpaid medical officer to various sports clubs, MacAuley offers a template medical examination checklist which can form the basis of any fitness assessment. He moves on to discuss the impact of old age on sports fitness—an area of increasing relevance as greater numbers of our patients are persuaded to take up a more active lifestyle.

The book moves into the traditional approach by anatomical areas of the body, and the problems which arise: common clinical problems such as shin splints, Osgood–Schlatter’s disease and back pain. These are competently dealt with, as are training issues such as diet and dehydration, and rehabilitation regimes for ankle injuries.

Robert Treharne Jones
GP and Trainer in Torquay


Couples who are infertile ride a monthly roller coaster while they are having treatment, the stresses reverberating through every aspect of their lives and affecting