BOOK REVIEW

Alcohol and Health (5th Edition). By Marsha Y. Morgan and E. Bruce Ritson, The Medical Council on Alcohol. ISBN 978-0-9563553-0-0 [The handbooks’ price is £15 per copy and can be obtained either by calling 02074874445 or emailing mca@medicouncilalcol.demon.co.uk or by visiting our website www.m-c-a.org.uk].

This text is primarily aimed at medical students and newly qualified doctors. I feel it is a very useful resource as alcohol affects every system of the body and therefore knowledge of the effects of alcohol is essential in every area of medicine.

At the very start of the text, before Chapter 1, there is a glossary of terms. I feel that this is well positioned as not only does it serve as a useful introduction, but it is also useful to refer back to while reading the text. Having the glossary of terms at the beginning rather than the end of the text means it is less likely to be overlooked or not noticed.

As soon as I started reading the text, I was struck by how engaging it is. Each chapter is very clearly laid out with lots of headings and bullet points which break up the text and maintain the interest of the reader. Many chapters also have graphs, diagrams, pictures of real patients and X-ray and scan pictures which I also feel adds interest and helps to clarify points made in the text. Furthermore, I particularly like the learning points’ boxes at the end of each chapter. Not only do these boxes highlight the key points, but they also help the reader to clarify and reflect on what they have learned from the chapter.

Compared with previous editions, several sections of this text have been significantly expanded. These include the sections on predisposition to alcohol-related harm, the psychosocial aspects of problem drinking and the management of alcohol misuse. For example, the section on management of alcohol misuse now extensively covers the available treatments and both community-based and specialist addiction services. Furthermore, it covers groups with special needs, including ethnic minority groups and young people and particularly adolescents. I feel that these expanded sections make this a useful text not only for medical students and newly qualified doctors, as originally intended, but also for other health-care professionals, including nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

The section on the management of specific alcohol-related problems now includes individual case studies. As these case histories cover important aspects of common problems where significant clinical judgement is required, I feel that they are of particular use to medical students and newly qualified doctors.

Finally, I feel that having appendices on alcohol and the law and workplace alcohol policies is yet another attractive feature of this text. Not only does this also serve to broaden the appeal and usefulness of the text, but these are areas that are often not covered by similar texts.

In conclusion, I feel that this text is a comprehensive and valuable resource for medical students and newly qualified doctors as well as other health-care professionals who come into contact with individuals who are misusing alcohol.

ASHLEY CAMERON
Royal Edinburgh Hospital