BOOK REVIEWS


The editors have collected an impressive array of contributors from the field of regulatory toxicology. This highly readable book leads us from a basic discussion of toxicity tests, through the procedures for toxicity testing of chemicals and into the field of regulatory toxicology. This is a rapidly changing science, and is going to be of increasing importance for all involved in the chemical and related industries due to the introduction of the European Union (EU) New Chemicals Policy.

Of particular interest is the chapter on alternatives to animal testing. This is going to be a subject of considerable debate as the requirement for testing of existing chemicals produces a major workload for the regulatory testing laboratories and we have all witnessed the public concern over animal testing. Although there are alternatives to animal testing for the initial screening, it will still be required for the later stages of screening for some time. However, the book thoughtfully demonstrates that animal testing can be minimized by careful planning and by manufacturers sharing data to avoid duplication.

There are no major omissions from the text, although I would have liked to see more discussion of impending EU legislation.

It is difficult to define the target audience for this book. Although the introduction to the theory of toxicity testing is of great use to occupational physicians in industry, its price would, I imagine, rule it out for routine purchase. I believe its main audience will be the wider chemical industry, where the impact of legislation will be felt. Although there is a clear procedure for the notification of new chemical substances, we must remember that there are 100 000 chemicals registered on the European Inventory of Existing Commercial Chemical Substances—many of which have undergone little or no toxicity testing. This book will be of great assistance to all involved in the process of data gathering in the future.

Rating

For general occupational physicians: ★★★ (Borrow from the library)

D. A. Gidlow


Trudie Chalder is a lecturer in the Department of Psychological Medicine at King’s College Hospital and works extensively with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) sufferers, for whom this book is intended.

The book describes fatigue and its various causes, and how this ‘normal’ phenomenon merges into CFS. It briefly describes cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and its use in the management of CFS before detailing the key elements of a self-management programme: setting graded realistic activity goals, keeping a progress diary and learning to adopt positive thinking in place of negative thinking.

The approach is straightforward, concentrating on practical measures for tackling the problems that CFS presents and avoiding the many unresolved debates about CFS. Scientific evidence for the value of CBT in CFS is not presented, although the author evidently draws on extensive personal experience.

Essentially, the message is ‘CFS can be a major problem. Often we don’t know why it happens, but a properly constructed programme based on CBT and setting goals for graded increase in activity can help sufferers achieve substantial and lasting gains in their level of functioning’.

It is difficult to judge the book from the perspective of those for whom it is primarily intended, but I suspect that its brevity, readability and illustration of practical techniques are likely to be of real value to its intended readership. I wonder how much it alone would help someone with severe CFS, although as an adjunct to a supervised CBT-based programme (for those lucky enough to have access to one) I suspect it would be a great help.

What relevance does this book have to the practising occupational physician? It is useful background reading, but few of us are likely to be involved in the clinical management of CFS. However, as we know, CFS can have a major impact on working life and in advising employees with CFS it can only be useful to be aware of, and where appropriate recommend, this publication.

Rating

★★★ (Borrow from the library)

Andrew Mountstephen