Your Questions Answered: Depression.
Cosmo Hallstrom and Nicola McClure.

This is one of a series of Your Questions Answered (YQA) books described on the back cover as providing ‘succinct expert opinion on the diagnosis, treatment and management of many chronic conditions’. Other YQAs cover schizophrenia, dementia, anxiety, stroke, contraception, Parkinson’s Disease, allergy and osteoporosis. The series is aimed at general practitioners, nurses and other health professionals, among which there is a very strong case for including occupational physicians. Why? Because this book is a mine of information on the current medical view of depression, and it is reasonable to assume that others in the series are equally good (my look through the schizophrenia YQA supports this view).

As experienced occupational physicians, we all have a good grasp of depressive illness, no doubt, but this book will help you feel just that bit more comfortable and confident. A straight read through will help update your general knowledge on depression. Or you can use it in a more specific way when dealing with a particular aspect of depressive illness. Written by a former consultant psychiatrist and a general practitioner, the book is not over-long (251 pages) and is easy to dip into, being well indexed, with 13 chapters covering clear topics (e.g. diagnosis, resistant depression, depression and self-harm). The three chapters on treatment of depression can help occupational physicians less actively involved in therapy to understand what drug is being given and why. This includes valuable information on drug side-effects such as withdrawal problems and the serotonin syndrome, and a good explanation of the main psychological therapies.
used. In addition, to give the authors credit, there is some coverage of work-related aspects, though this is not a particular strength of the book.

The subheadings within each chapter are written as questions (339 in the entire book) and include some which patients are likely to pose. There is a good chance that you will find an exact answer to the particular question you have in mind. These are occasionally supplemented by case studies, though I would have liked to have seen more than are provided. There are also some useful appendices, including one providing valuable contact organizations for mental health problems.

Like any textbook, it cannot give all the answers, but it is a muscular, readable and concise volume which does what it says on the cover. Although I have a natural bias against ‘series’ type medical texts, as they often have a homogenous, forgettable quality, I am switched on to the YQA series as a consequence of reading this book. Given the huge amount of psychiatric illnesses occupational physicians deal with, this one should make your job easier.

**Rating**

☆☆☆☆☆ (Buy, read and keep)

Frank Gallagher