

will be an adjunctive text in a medical library, I am not convinced that the usefulness of this text outweighs its shortcomings.

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Fundamentals of Clinical Practice: A Textbook on the Patient, Doctor and Society. Edited by Mark B. Mengel and Warren L. Holleman. 515 pp. New York, Plenum Publishing, 1996. \$59.95. ISBN 0-306-45348-7.

This book would be an excellent addition to community and behavioral medicine curricula in both residency and medical school settings. Several of the authors are well-known teachers and researchers in family medicine. The textbook addresses the patient-physician relationship from a variety of angles. The first section addresses the patient, with chapters on human health and disease and individual and family development; the second section deals with becoming and being a physician in today's challenging health care environment; and the third section describes the numerous contexts of family, community, the workplace, environment, culture, and economics that have an impact on the physician-patient relationship. The remainder of the book is devoted to special issues of health policy and economics, medical ethics, and the current problems of tobacco, alcohol, and drug abuse; violence; mental illness; sexually transmitted diseases; vulnerable and indigent populations; and maternal and child health. Overall, I found the book to be fascinating and well researched.

This book successfully keeps the focus on the patient-physician relationship by inserting case presentations at regular intervals. The chapters are designed with cases and questions for small-group discussion at the end of each chapter.

When I used several of the chapters this past year during our community medicine rotation, the answers to some of the questions accompanying the case presentations did not appear to be straightforward. A facilitator's guide to accompany the cases and questions might be helpful. Additionally, the residents found that discussing cases which might not be applicable to their practice community to be less meaningful. Nevertheless, the cases raised lots of good issues for discussion.

This attempt at covering a broad range of topics is both successful and comprehensive. The book begins by focusing on the physician-patient relationship, adding layer upon layer until we can see in its entirety how complex and diverse practicing medicine can be, particularly in the context of worrisome public health issues. Medical schools and residency programs will find this textbook on the relationship of the patient, physician, and society a welcome resource as they strive to impart the community and public health implications of the physician's role.

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Manual of Skin Surgery—A Practical Guide to Dermatologic Procedures. By David J. Leffell and Marc D. Brown. 250 pp., illustrated. New York, Wiley-Liss, 1997. \$45. ISBN:0-471-13411-2.

This textbook of excisional cutaneous surgery is designed for medical students, residents, and practicing physicians. The text begins with a review of basic principles of anatomy and skin pathophysiology and then focuses on specific procedural skills training for office-based care and procedures. The book contains 13 chapters on diagnosis, practical anatomy, wound healing, skin biopsy, local anesthesia, surgical instruments, wound closure materials, patient preparation, basic excisional surgery, surgical complications, special topics in dermatologic surgery, and risk management. The chapter on special topics helps the practitioner modify general approaches for special circumstances. One appendix includes action guides for skin biopsy, pigmented lesions, basal cell cancer, squamous cell cancer, and complications. These action guides are suggested algorithms in the work-up and treatment strategies. Another appendix includes vendors for dermatologic surgery products.

The book can be understood by learners at any level. The index is detailed and easy to follow. The text uses drawings and color pictures to focus the reader. The drawings are extremely helpful, particularly in the challenging area of the face, where special anatomic consideration is given to recommended planes for elliptical excision. The strategy of the authors, beginning with basic principles of defining the lesion, reviewing the anatomy, and describing normal wound healing, followed by procedural considerations of anesthesia and biopsy, is very effective. Although there is no formal bibliography, there are suggestions for further reading with descriptions of seven other texts. It is important to understand that this text does not relate to skin disease but rather surgical approaches to lesions.

I believe that this reference is useful for the family practice clinic, is an excellent learning guide for family medicine residents, and provides a strong foundation for medical students. Best of all, its relatively low cost should allow even those on a limited budget to include it in a personal library.

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A Measure of My Days: The Journal of a Country Doctor. By David Loxterkamp. 321 pp. Hanover, NH, University Press of New England, 1997. \$24.95 (paper). ISBN 0-87451-799-0.

This is an engaging and important book that should take its place next to the classic photo-essay by Berger and Mohr, *A Fortunate Man*, which describes the life of the English country doctor John Sassall (Berger J, Mohr J. A fortunate man. New York: Pantheon Books, 1967). Each provides an intimate look inside the prac-

tice of medicine and the life of the practitioner in the community.

David Loxterkamp is a family physician in a small coastal town in Maine. In his 10th year in practice he chose to record his life with regular journal entries, which he then worked into this book. In doing so, he pulls the reader into his life and provides a very enjoyable reading experience. In the process of examination he seems to have developed a fuller sense of self, home, family, and community, and we are privileged to share that journey.

There is a chapter for each month of the year and for each of the four seasons, but the book is much more than an accounting of those days. By moving from the events of the day back into memory of earlier years and by anticipating the future, the author weaves a captivating narrative. The title indicates that the pages will reveal the daily life of a country doctor, and the book delivers on that promise. It reveals with honesty and candor the highs and lows and the growth of its author as physician, husband, father, and person of faith. It is a book about community and a deepening commitment to one community as home.

Dr. Loxterkamp's gift with words ensures that the reader will experience the events and emotions of the days recorded. During the several days I was reading the book, I found myself experiencing elation, depression, anxiety, and contentment. At first I thought these emotions reflected the undulating circumstances of my own days, but I later concluded that was not so. I believe the writing evokes in the reader the emotions and feelings of the author as he reacts to the circumstances of his life. I suspect also that each reader will react differently to the events described through memory of personal experience.

A physician with community practice background will find this journal stimulates recall of the early years of establishing practice, home, and family. Some who felt isolation and frustration in those years might find reassurance that their experiences were not unique. Anyone who seeks to understand the practice of medicine in community would benefit from reading this work, as would those considering such a career. This book should be read by persons responsible for planning, shaping, financing, or regulating community health care systems and organizations, for in doing so, they would develop an intimate understanding of the workings of such systems and the very personal needs they try to meet. Such an understanding cannot be found in the collection of diagnostic classifications, lists of symptoms, reports of encounters and procedures, and similar tabulations used to describe or evaluate a medical practice.

Dr. Loxterkamp reveals his life to be one of intensity, commitment, and searching. He also shares his contentments and satisfactions. One might wish him more sheer joy and happiness than what seems to come through in the narrative. But, he says of himself (page

136): "There is always a tension between enjoying life and examining it."

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Patients Are a Virtue: Practicing Medicine in the Pennsylvania Amish Country. By Henry S. Wentz. 175 pp. Morgantown, Pa, Masthof Press, 1997. \$12.95. ISBN 1-883294-49-5.

Have you wondered what it would be like to practice medicine from 1948 to 1988 among the Amish in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania? This fascinating period in medicine spanned the early years of antibiotics, the scourges of polio and rheumatic fever, the shift from solo to group practice, and the changes in health care financing from the \$2 fee-for-service office visit to medical insurance to managed care.

Dr. Wentz chronicles these events, covering four decades, through 39 short vignettes. He writes in a matter-of-fact, straightforward, conversational style that is most likely consistent with the way in which he practiced and cared for his patients. As he relates the satisfactions and frustrations of his practice, he intersperses reflections on lessons he learned, such as the value of nurses, the power of suggestion, the courage of patients facing adversity, and the importance of a supportive family and community for both patient and physician. Perhaps his most interesting insights evolve from experiences with his Amish patients that illustrate how their beliefs sustained them as they dealt with the challenges of life and death. He also describes the difficulties of getting the Amish to accept such preventive measures as prenatal care, well-baby examinations, and immunizations.

Throughout these episodes Dr. Wentz conveys acceptance of his patients, himself, and his times without undue moral judgment or philosophical speculation. Nevertheless, the reader becomes aware of the unique problems associated with practicing alone out of an office in one's home, the stresses on marriage and children, the interruptions of family gatherings by patients with emergencies, and the concerns of losing patients to a competing physician in the community.

Most of these stories are not particularly dramatic. Their impact arises from the cumulative descriptions of a type of practice that will not be repeated. A physician emerges who appeared to possess the qualities necessary to succeed during a unique time in medical history within a geographical location enriched by people with distinctive motivations and moral principles. Thus, this book might be of interest to those physicians who would like to know more about this way of life, to people living in the vicinity of Lancaster County, and to lay persons who wonder about the daily activities of a busy general practitioner.

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