

Ambulatory medicine: the primary care of families, third edition

By: Mengel MB, Schwiebert LP

McGraw-Hill Book Company, Suite 2310, One Hung To Road, Kwun Tong, Kowloon, Hong Kong
US\$44.95, pp 770, ISBN 0 8385 0387 X

This book provides comprehensive coverage of those complaints commonly encountered at the offices of family physicians, and general practitioners will undoubtedly find it useful and practical. It also has an adequate section on chronic illness. There, however, seems to be insufficient emphasis given to preventive medicine, for example, no reference has been made to primary medical care or the role of family physicians in providing holistic care, continuity of care, and quality care. The value of health promotion and health education has also been overlooked in this book. Working in partnership with other members of the primary health care team, family physicians can play an important role in community care and the care of the chronically ill. They should be encouraged to take an active part in community health; the book is lacking in this aspect.

In today's society, many diseases occur as a result of changing lifestyles and behaviours. The social determinants of health—in particular, smoking, substance misuse, unbalanced diet, lack of exercise, and irresponsible sex—are fast becoming the major factors underlying disease and illness. The book does not appear to give sufficient emphasis in this area. A section on the elderly patient is included, although there is little discussion on the preventive aspects in the ageing population. In fact, the World Health Organization's

campaign on 'active living, active ageing' should be promoted.

Ambulatory care goes beyond the practice of ambulatory medicine by family physicians. Rather, it is a multi-disciplinary approach, involving other members of the primary care team such as domiciliary physiotherapists, domiciliary occupational therapists, and community nurses. Ambulatory care is not therefore only about diagnosing and treating patients' symptoms but also places great emphasis on the holistic care of patients and their families. It covers four major areas—health promotion, disease prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation—all of whose activities are largely outside the hospital setting. This book fails to give due emphasis to all the important aspects of ambulatory care and the practice of ambulatory medicine in the primary care of families.

To summarise, this book gives good coverage of the clinical aspects of family medicine practice, but little mention is made of health promotion, disease prevention, and primary medical care, which are of equal importance in family medicine practice.

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Medeor manual

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Medpharm GmbH Scientific Publishers, Birkenwaldstrasse 44, D-70191 Stuttgart, Germany
DM19.80, pp 136, ISBN 3 8876 3074 2

This manual is published under the auspices of the German Medical Welfare Organisation, Action Medeor. The author, Dr Johannes Bircher, has extensive experience of patient management and the inter-relationships between social, environmental, and other factors in the tropics. As stated in the preface, the manual is intended to assist public health providers (eg physicians, nurses, physicians' assistants, and other

auxiliary staff with limited medical knowledge) who have to work far away from major medical centres, under conditions that are less than ideal, and with a narrow range of drugs to choose from.

The book is divided into seven sections. The first gives a short description of common symptoms and general principles of diagnosis and treatment, and the