

teaching. She 'retired' in 1993, but continued to assist in the practice under Drs Whittaker and Pauline Close. Her experience and integrity assisted greatly in the smooth transition to the expanded pathology practice.

Unfortunately, during 1993 her husband Jimmy's health deteriorated and he died in November 1993. Maggie herself became ill shortly thereafter and was diagnosed as having leukaemia in April 1994. She suffered greatly during the ensuing months but bore her illness so stoically and maintained her sense of humour through it all. She died the day after her 67th birthday on 9 March 1995.

Sympathy is extended to Maggie's family in their loss and with this comes a sense of gratitude, from all those who knew and worked with her, for the many years of friendship, guidance, work and fun shared with her.

# Books

## **Outcomes into Clinical Practice**

Ed. by Tony Delamothe. Pp. xii + 164. Illustrated. London: BMJ. 1994. ISBN 0-7279-0888-X.

At a recent conference which attracted a range of health professionals from the private and public sectors and examined South Africa's current and future health options, an eminent Australian health economist commented on our position in the managed health care stakes. South Africa is entering the race, beginning to undertake clinical audits, monitor patient profiles and examine prescribing practices. In most cases the purpose of the exercise is cost-containment, and little attention is being paid to quality of care.

While we are grappling with these basic issues, other countries have advanced to the point where funders, purchasers and consumers are demanding information about outcomes. This book, *Outcomes into Clinical Practice*, emerged from a meeting organised by the BMA, the BMJ Publishing Group and the UK Clearing House for Information on the 'Assessment of Health Outcomes'.

The point of the book is to define outcomes research and consider how the results could be fed back into clinical practice. Outcomes research can be viewed as the response to variations in clinical practices, e.g., geographic variations in rates of procedures used in similar patient groups, or variations in outcomes when different providers use the same intervention. The research involves methods and technologies to measure outcomes of care, including quality of life and functional status.

When recommending a treatment, doctors need to know the likely outcomes of different treatments and what is of importance to individual patients. Unless clinical decisions consider patients' preferences, the medical profession risks providing treatment to patients who do not value an expected outcome, while withholding it from those who do.

For those who wish to learn more about what outcomes research means and where it is taking us, this book is a valuable primer. It acknowledges the novelty of the 'technology' and offers caveats such as the desirability of

less comparison between sites until we are more certain about what works best. The editor has put together a series of short papers which cover one or other aspect of outcome research. Written by a variety of health professionals, they are presented in the spirit that 'at this stage the benefits of diversity probably outweigh the disadvantages'. However different it will look in a few years' time, outcomes research is here to stay, and readers of *SAMJ* would do well to include this book in their reading lists.

**A. D. Rothberg**

## **Books received**

The receipt of these books is acknowledged, and this listing must be regarded as sufficient return for the courtesy of the sender. Books that appear to be of particular interest will be reviewed as space permits. The *SAMJ* does not publish unsolicited reviews.

**Instrumented Spinal Fusion. Preoperative Evaluation, Indications and Techniques.** Ed. Ralf H. Wittenberg in collaboration with Reinhard Steffen. Pp. xi + 189. Illustrated. DM98,00. Stuttgart: Georg Thieme Verlag. 1994. ISBN 0-86577-583-4.

**Update in Gastric Surgery.** 11th Grenzland Symposium. Ed. H.-D. Riiher, J. W. Heise, P. R. Verreet and M. Varney. Pp. xiv + 200. Illustrated. DM98,00. Stuttgart: Georg Thieme Verlag. 1994. ISBN 3-13-101041-X.

**Pathology of the Lung.** 2nd Edition. Ed. William M. Thurlbeck and Andrew M. Churg. Pp. xii + 1151. Illustrated. DM348,00. Stuttgart: Georg Thieme Verlag. 1995. ISBN 3-13-665402-1.

**AIDS and STDs in Africa. Bridging the Gap Between Traditional Healing and Modern Medicine.** By Edward C. Green. Pp. xi + 250. R79,95. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press. 1994. ISBN 9-780869-809037.

**Control of Foodborne Trematode Infections.** WHO Technical Report Series No. 849. Pp. viii + 157. Sw.fr.26/US\$23,40. Geneva: WHO. 1995. ISBN 92-40120849X.

**Epidemiology and Prevention of Cardiovascular Diseases in Elderly People.** WHO Technical Report Series No. 853. Pp. v + 67. Sw.fr.14/US\$12,60. Geneva: WHO. 1995. ISBN 92-4-120853-8.

**Complications of Abortion. Technical and Managerial Guidelines for Prevention and Treatment.** WHO. Pp. 147. Illustrated. Sw.fr.35/US\$31,50. Geneva: WHO. 1995. ISBN 92-4-154469-4.

**Mental Illness in General Health Care. An International Study.** Ed. T. B. Ustün and N. Sarorius. Pp. ix + 375. Illustrated. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. 1995. ISBN 0-471-95491-8.

**Evidence-based General Practice. A Critical Reader.** By L. Ridsdale. Pp. viii + 174. £11,95. London: WB Saunders. 1995. ISBN 0-7020-1611-X.

**Out in the Cold. Academic Boycotts and the Isolation of South Africa.** By Lorraine J. Haricombe and F. W. Lancaster. Pp. xii + 113. US\$29,50. Arlington: Information Resources Press. 1995. ISBN 0-87815-067-6.

**A Manual of Practical Labour Ward Management.** 3rd Edition. Ed. J. Dommissie. Pp. iv + 84. R25,00. Cape Town: Dept of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, UCT. 1995. ISBN 0-7992-1571-6.

**Assistance in Hunger Strikes.** A manual for physicians and other health personnel dealing with hunger strikers. Johannes Wier Foundation for Health and Human Rights. Pp. 42. Dfl.15,00. Amersfoort: Johannes Wier Foundation. 1995. ISBN 90-733550-12-2.