Concepts are clearly defined and will inform health professionals, lay people and government, hopefully enhancing confidence in tackling alcohol misuse.

Eric Appleby of Alcohol Concern highlights changing patterns of consumption, the powerful advertising lobby and binge drinking, particularly in young women and northern regions. The protective effects of alcohol in coronary heart and cerebrovascular disease are soon overtaken by all-cause mortality, when people exceed sensible recommendations.

Successive governments have been ambivalent since alcohol generates taxes and employment. Hence, the National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy was delayed until 2004. Little wonder, since ten different government departments have an interest in alcohol policy with many in direct conflict.

Paton describes absorption, metabolism, distribution and tolerance to alcohol and explains why women are more susceptible than men. Apparently, on average, six people are affected by each problem drinker. Genetic, familial, constitutional and environmental factors influence drinking patterns. Alcohol misuse is also often missed in older people.

The Paddington Alcohol Test is a 1-min questionnaire for recognising alcohol misuse in A&E. Touquet describes the 'teachable moment', that window when the patient may be amenable to a brief intervention. He references the excellent Royal College of Physicians' report *Alcohol, can the NHS afford it? – Recommendations for a coherent alcohol strategy for hospitals*. Touquet highlights the recognition of Wernicke's encephalopathy and its prompt treatment with intravenous Pabrinex.

Paton tables the litany of medical conditions associated with heavy drinking, and surgical problems, especially trauma, are highlighted. People who drink more than eight units per day have a 3-fold higher risk of postoperative morbidity, considerably reduced by pre-operative abstinence.

John Henry gives a practical guide to interactions between alcohol and drugs, both legal and illicit, while Geoffrey Smerdon describes alcohol misuse in primary care. A GP can appreciate the perspective of the whole family. Currently, 98% of excessive drinkers who visit GPs' surgeries are not identified; sadly, the specification for essential services under the new General Medical Services Contract omits alcohol.

Bruce Ritson succinctly reviews advice and counselling, treatment and resources. Two-thirds of excessive drinkers respond well to treatment, the long-term prognosis being surprisingly good with relapses forming part of recovery. Brief intervention should be offered when hazardous or harmful drinking is first identified. This comprises ten minutes' discussion and explanation, provision of a self-help booklet, and offering a further appointment in one or two weeks. He describes shared care, particularly with alcohol specialist nurses in hospital or the community, awareness of specialist services and the tremendous contribution of Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon and Alateen.

The illustrations and graphs, bullet points, boxes and index are excellent. I strongly recommend this book, both professionally and personally, especially to all alcohol healthcare professionals, hospital doctors, particularly A&E staff, students, lay people interested in alcohol, including politicians and Department of Health strategists.

ABC of Alcohol, fourth edition, brings the subject right up to date. In 1994, I bought three copies of the third edition to loan to junior doctors and students writing articles or projects. Only one copy survives. I will not be lending my fourth edition to anybody!

Skills for Communicating with Patients (2nd edn)

JONATHAN SILVERMAN, SUZANNE KURTZ, JULIET DRAPER

EXTENT P/H	262 p, paperback
PRICE/ISBN	£27.95 1857756401
PUBLISHER	Radcliffe (Oxford), 2004
REVIEWER	Malcolm Puntis
STAR RATING	****

Will any of us admit that our communication skills are below par? Could we take a better history? Could we help patients to better understand and participate in their treatment? Will this book, now in its second edition, help practising surgeons to improve their communication skills and hopefully help to avoid complaints and litigation, so many of which stem from misunderstanding?

In the first chapter, 'Defining what to teach and learn: an overview of the communication skills curriculum', the style is such that I was not sure if this book was going to be a manual for teachers and organisers of courses or an instruction book for students. Helpfully, in the introduction the authors ask: 'Who is the intended audience?' The reply they give includes learners at all levels of education, facilitators and programme directors, medical educators, medical education administrators, funding agencies and medical politicians. In fact, just about everybody and, having read the remaining seven chapters, I agree with them and suggest that there are very few of us who could not benefit from a diligent reading of this book.

A stylistic irritation stems from its joint Canadian and English authorship. The authors try to fend off any criticism in this area with another useful question in the introduction: 'How have we addressed style issues in a book intended for the European, North American and wider international market?' Indeed, there is a little glossary to explain, for example, that they use the term 'specialist' rather than 'consultant' and 'resident' rather than 'registrar'. Nevertheless, in a book concerned with clarity of communication, this is somewhat irksome.

Chapter 1 is about defining what to teach and learn and describes the important Calgary–Cambridge Guide, for which these authors are well known. The next six chapters provide a detailed exposition of the skills of this framework: ‘Initiating the session’, ‘Gathering information’, ‘Providing structure to the interview’, ‘Building a relationship’, ‘Explaining and planning’ and, finally, ‘Closing the session’. There is a final chapter dealing with specific issues, such as breaking bad news and age-related issues. The layout of the chapters is good and clear, and there are useful shaded boxes to summarise some aspects together with boxes which include snippets of patient–doctor dialogue to emphasise particular points.

The authors make much of the fact that this volume is research-based and provide references for many of the points that they make. Chapter 6, ‘Explanation and planning’, is particularly well referenced. In some places, however, they have the slightly irritating habit of saying ‘we know from research...’ and then fail to provide a reference to the relevant work. There is a further reading section and a reference section which includes around 450 entries.

The main effect this book had on me is that now, when I speak to patients, I find myself checking that I have given them enough time to respond and check that they have understood what I have said. In short, I believe that use of the advice in this book cannot help but make you a better doctor.

Adrenal Glands: Diagnostic Aspects and Surgical Therapy

DIMITRIOS LINOS, JON VAN HEERDEN

EXTENT P/H	362 p, hardback
PRICE/ISBN	£138.50 3540410996
PUBLISHER	Springer (Berlin), 2004
REVIEWER	Richard Collins
STAR RATING	*****

This book has joint editors, one from Kifissia in Greece and the other from the Mayo Clinic in the US where most of the contributors have passed through or been close associates of Jon van Heerden.

In his preface, van Heerden asks why there is a need for yet another test book. I am not too sure that the question has been answered but what is produced is in fact a wonderful atlas of modern, up-to-date, adrenal surgery. There are excellent chapters on the anatomy, physiology and biochemistry of the adrenal glands as well as on adrenal imaging. The various syndromes associated with the adrenal gland are described in great detail and this book brings together a wealth of experience of some extremely rare conditions.

There are excellent up-to-date chapters on incidentaloma and its management and, finally, chapters on the various

forms of surgery appropriate for the management of adrenal conditions. The illustrations are clear and the text valuable.

All in all, this is an excellent monograph on the surgery of the adrenal glands and is to be recommended to all who have an interest in the management of the rare conditions associated with them.

Orthopedic Principles: A Resident's Guide

DAVID IP

EXTENT P/H	300 p, paperback
PRICE/ISBN	£30.50 3540232591
PUBLISHER	Springer (Berlin), 2005
REVIEWER	John Henderson
STAR RATING	***

The author, who is from Hong Kong, states in his preface that the purpose of this book is at least three-fold. Firstly, it should be helpful to read before professional examinations, grand rounds, vivas and long case examinations. Secondly, it is aimed not only at surgeons-in-training but also at surgeons requiring re-certification and, in particular, surgeons in developing and under-developed countries. Thirdly, it is directed at the specialised surgeon who wishes to know the latest concepts of management in other fields of orthopaedics.

It is set out in eight chapters: Basic Science and Common Sports Injuries, Paediatric Orthopaedics, Hand Surgery, Foot and Ankle Surgery, Spine Surgery, Total Joint Surgery, Orthopaedic Infections and Musculoskeletal Tumour Principles. Each consists of lists of bullet points and brief discussions relating to the topics in each section. Although this sounds rather dry, it is surprisingly readable.

The information is generally well organised, providing pertinent revision material for trainees, particularly in the chapters on hand surgery, spine surgery and total joint replacement. There are also interesting chapters for those of us who have subspecialised and need a ‘quick fix’ of, for example, hand surgery or spinal surgery before discussing problems with colleagues more learned in these fields.

However, a significant omission from the book is a chapter on elbow and shoulder problems. There is no mention of degenerative and inflammatory conditions of these joints and no mention either of rotator cuff tendinopathy, impingement syndrome, acromioclavicular joint problems or atraumatic shoulder instability. This deficiency needs to be remedied if the book is to be presented as a comprehensive guide.

There are inconsistencies in the use of classifications. For instance, in the section ‘How to use this book’, the author states that he expects the reader to know the classifications used for most of the common orthopaedic conditions but then goes on to outline numerous classifications in the text, missing out others just as pertinent to the trainee.