The booklet offers a combination of health promotion ideas, useful to all older people and their carers, practical advice on the care of natural teeth and dentures, and explains the most common problems, suggesting how they should be managed. It alerts carers to issues for older people with communication difficulties, and self-care and promotes maximising potential and family involvement. Positive attitudes to older people are inherent and the fundamental principles of consent and choice are highlighted.

It is not stated who wrote the booklet, but not only does the author have excellent knowledge of modern oral health care, but also insight into the realities both for older people and those who care for them. At £5 it represents excellent value for money. The introduction states: 'Our appearance is central to our self image, and our teeth and our smile can be as important at 90 as at 19.'

This publication will help get that important message across.

Mary Clay MSc, PGCEA, RGN, RM

Hysterectomy, Vaginal Repair and Surgery for Stress Incontinence
Sally Haslett, Molly Jennings, Hilary Walsgrove and Wendy Weatheritt
Beaconsfield Publishers Ltd
48 pp £4.95 ISBN 0 906584 53 1
This book, written primarily for patients, is a useful resource for all healthcare staff working in hospital and/or community settings. It explains the most common gynaecological surgical procedures in an easy-to-understand format.

Although it is meant for patients, nurses working with older people may find it useful as an introduction and aid to discussion with patients to enable them to make informed decisions about their treatment. A glossary would be a useful addition as would a detailed index to enable specific information to be located easily. Diagramatic representation of TVT and possibly colposuspension techniques would have complemented written explanations, and information about the injection of bulking agents could also have been included.

There is plenty of sensible advice included in the later sections on exercise, posture, daily activities, general health, likely physical effects and sexuality. But it would have been appropriate to include information here about the existence of specialists such as psychossexual counsellors and continence advisers.

As a patient booklet it is possibly rather lengthy, but relevant sections could be highlighted for individual patients by healthcare staff. However, this small book, economically priced at £4.95, would be a very useful addition to the ward or community office bookshelf as a resource for nurses and other healthcare staff.

Lesley Wilson BSc (Hons), RGN, FETC

Writing Old Age
Julia Johnson (Ed)
The Centre for Policy on Ageing and The Open University
87 pp £10 ISBN 1 90109 755 2
This book is a set of quirky but interesting papers on how ageing is seen in fiction and other forms of creative writing. Each of the five papers has a distinct and perhaps narrow focus and because of this there may be little appeal to some readers. There is one paper on the poem about the old woman, which has been called Kate (also known as Crabbit Old Woman or Open Your Eyes). This traces the origins and impact of this poem and the poem written in response, sometimes known as The Nurse’s Reply. There is a paper on fiction written about residential care and there is then a paper about images of ageing in 1920s fiction followed by one on the novels of Stanley Middleton. The final paper, and the one I found most appealing, was an account of conversations between Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir in 1974, and a later publication by de Beauvoir. This paper introduces the method of age autobiography.

This is a book for gerontological practitioners who are already interested in the portrayal of ageing in fiction and have skills in analysing fiction. It might also prove a useful resource for educationalists looking to make use of fiction in their teaching.

Jan Dewing RGN, MN, BSc, DipNursEd, RNT, DipNursing