A Guide to Laboratory Investigations (Fourth edition)
Michael McGhee
Radcliffe Medical Press
180 pp
£21.95
ISBN: 1 85775 823 4

I am lucky to have the third edition of this book on my shelves; I make frequent reference to it and to receive this updated edition is a great delight. My delight is heightened by the fact that, at nearly £22, this is quite an expensive book for its size. Nevertheless, it remains good value.

The book lies somewhere between a Materia medica and a textbook on clinical laboratory investigations. However, it is neither. Really, it is a series of notes on the range of laboratory investigations in which the clinician (the book is aimed at GPs but nurses and especially practice nurses will find it useful) will find the normal range of values, the rationale for the investigation and, often, an explanation of what the test result means – the INR (International Normalised Ratio), for example. The book also provides an indication of what abnormal test results may mean and suggested diagnoses and treatment.

The material is organised into six chapters: haematology; microbiology; fertility and pregnancy testing; rheumatology; biochemistry; and miscellaneous. Each chapter is divided into short sections that are easily identifiable from the contents list which, along with the comprehensive glossary and the index, make material easy to retrieve.

Sometimes the information, which is quite terse, leaves you wanting more: why do semen samples have to be collected after two days abstinence but no more than seven? However, for anyone teaching life sciences and pathology to pre-registration nurses, I would recommend having this on your shelves.

Roger Watson BSc, PhD, RGN, CBIol, FBiol, ILTM, FRSA

Chronic Disease Nursing: A Rheumatology Example
Susan Oliver (ed)
Whurr Publishing
281 pp
£25
ISBN: 1 86156 412 0

Clinically focused, this book provides a resource for the development of a chronic disease nursing service. It provides an overview of chronic disease and of nursing within the context of policy development and the need to consider this when establishing a nursing service.

Laid out in a logical and sequential fashion, the editor uses a variety of experts as authors for chapters throughout. The use of the ‘patient’s perspective’ grounds the book in the ‘real’ world.

Although focused on rheumatology, it has a wider appeal and will be of use to those practitioners either working within or establishing chronic disease services.

In the current service development climate, it will have great appeal, but, as is the nature of policy and current treatment developments, it could become outdated as a result of the fast-moving health policy agenda and the development of new treatment protocols.

This book will provide a useful resource/source of reference for practitioners working within chronic disease management. The decision to purchase it or borrow it will be dependent on the amount of current subject appeal and its relevance/usage at a given time.

Jonathan Webster BA (Hons), DPSN, MSc, RGN

Dementia Care
Trevor Adams and Jill Manthorpe
Arnold Publishers
260 pp
£18.99
ISBN: 0 340 81020 3

As care practice in the work of people with dementia develops, more and more textbooks appear to support and inspire the workforce.

This particular book is aimed at the professional care worker rather than care staff or informal carers and covers an interesting collection of topics in the care of people with dementia.

It aims to introduce new theories and approaches to work and challenge some established methods and therapeutic interventions.

The first chapter, ‘Constructing dementia’, is an interesting challenge to the evidence base of Kitwood’s work and discusses in some depth different discourses. This takes the reader into new avenues of thought and opinion which can only enable a more healthy and informed debate.

Other useful chapters, covering such topics as palliative care, understanding group processes and young people with dementia, draw together issues that need further exposure.

A thought-provoking book; recommended for professional workers undertaking specialist practice or higher academic activity.

Lynne Phair MA, BSc (Hons), DPNS, RMN, RGN

What To Do When Someone Dies
Paul Harris
Which? Books
192 pp
£10
ISBN 0 85202 968 3

This is a practical book offering sensitively written, straightforward information. Although the author is a funeral director, it considers all options including how to conduct a funeral without using the services of an undertaker.

I tested the details by asking friends to pose questions and then seeing if I could find the answer. The book never failed me. Do you have to have a coffin for a cremation? Yes, and it has to meet certain specifications. Can you bury your loved one in your own grounds? Yes, provided that you gain clearance from environmental health and meet various other legal conditions.

Most of the book, however, covers the everyday questions that occur to anybody faced with arranging a funeral. It is designed for the lay person who has no experience of coping with death. It explains the steps to be to be taken from the moment of death, either at home or in hospital, in a way that is sympathetic but practical. Details range from making the initial call to the doctor and undertaker, through how to register the death (including a chapter on Scottish laws) to different styles and costs of funerals.

The book concludes with a list of addresses of organisations offering help and support to bereaved individuals.

Anybody who comes into contact with families in the immediate aftermath of death would benefit from having a copy of this book to hand so that they can provide answers to questions from the newly bereaved.

Ruth Sander RGN, MSc, PGCE