What's on: the best of the week's health-related TV and radio

Friday January 19
BBC 2 12.40-1am
*Is The Sun Bad For You?*
Before that winter break, consider the effect of the sun on your health as discussed in this BBC Learning Zone programme.

Tuesday January 23
BBC Radio 3 4-5pm
*Anatomy of Depression*
Music can express the depths of depression.

BBC Radio 4 8-8.40pm
*File on 4*
The programme focuses on incontinence and its impact on the emotional wellbeing of sufferers.

Pick of the week

Hoping to lift the taboo on sexual dysfunction, *Better Sex* follows the work of marriage guidance bureau Relate. It offers a sex therapy service, attended by 3,000 couples a year and boasting a 75 per cent success rate. The programmes look at specific cases, addressing problems such as inhibited sexual desire and loss of interest in sex. These issues, though seldom discussed openly, may be more widespread than previously suspected. The series encourages us to talk about it.

Compiled by nurse and lecturer Margaret Paul

The power of patients’ groups

*Patient Power? The Poles of Power in Health Care in Britain and America*

Bruce Wood
Open University Press
Price: £19.99
ISBN: 0 335 20367 1

This text examines the political power and influence of patients' associations concerned with particular diseases or medical conditions. Bruce Wood surveyed more than 200 such organisations in the UK and the US. He acknowledges the dearth of literature relating to these organisations, a paradox considering their size and financial standing.

As charities, patients' associations are required to be non-political, but Mr Wood challenges the view that they exert no political influence. For example, AIDS charities have been successful in maintaining pressure on governments to prioritise research and provide better care facilities.

This study is far-reaching and comprehensive, with useful information that will be of value to healthcare students, practitioners, managers and the associations.

It is well researched and presented, and should be recommended to all students of healthcare policy and politics.

*Professor Brenda C. Poulton RGN, RHV, BA, MSc, PhD*

The book's focus is directly related to practice nursing but it also deals with the functioning and care delivered in general practice. It is a valuable addition to the literature on primary health care and particularly on practice nursing.

*Constance Martin RGN, RM, NDN, RNT MPhil*

Nursing Homeless Men: A Study of Proactive Intervention

John Atkinson
Whurr, £25
ISBN: 1 86156 149 0

This is essentially an account of the author's PhD thesis on the district nursing care of homeless men in Glasgow. It raises important questions about how homeless people perceive their care needs and how they relate to those who provide that care. It also identifies how perceptions held by healthcare professionals can mitigate against the delivery of effective care.

The author stresses that his findings from this small study cannot be generalised. But he does say that district nurses are ideally placed to be at the centre of caring for homeless people: "Ill-health should be explored as a possible cause for homelessness and to enable improved care delivery."

This book provides a detailed insight into how homeless people interact with those providing care, and provides some salutary reminders of how stereotypical views can prevent effective care being given.

Sarah Fisher RN, BSc(Hons), MSc, PGDip HE