

Book reviews

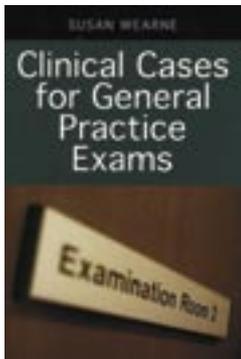


Clinical Cases for General Practice Exams

Susan Wearne

McGraw-Hill Australia, 2005

\$34.95, ISBN 0-74-71542-9



As a general practice registrar, I jumped at the opportunity to review a book that aims to assist doctors in their preparation for the clinical component of the RACGP Examination.

'Clinical cases for general practice exams' contains 50 cases based on common clinical scenarios designed to be used as practice role plays to help familiarise the reader with the exam format.

Each case starts with an information sheet for the doctor, paired with information for the role playing patient. A checklist for a suggested approach that the 'examiner' can tick off during the role play lists all points that should be covered. Each case concludes with a summary of the key issues and a list of references for further reading.

The author suggests that the intending candidate approach each case fresh rather than reading the book cover-to-cover. This aims to develop the logical application of clinical skills and knowledge, rather than just reading and

memorising.

This book is useful for general practice registrars and other doctors preparing for clinical general practice exams, as well as medical students. It would be best used in a study group or with supervisors or colleagues. The author also suggests an isolated doctor could use the cases to practise with other doctors via telephone or teleconferencing. I found it helpful participating in the cases as the doctor, patient, facilitator and observer. The cases are clear and easy to follow.

The cases are similar to those in the exam, and the author's status as an examiner for the RACGP definitely instils confidence! I recommend this book to anyone planning to sit the FRACGP examination (or similar) to become familiar with the style and set-up of the clinical examination, and to improve their consulting skills for real life.

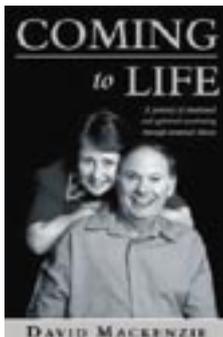
*Lona Brown
Melbourne, Vic*

Coming To Life

David Mackenzie

Australia: Harper Collins, 2002

\$30.00, ISBN 0-7322-7500-8



Reading David Mackenzie's compelling book, subtitled: 'A journey of emotional and spiritual awakening through terminal illness', gives grounds for consideration of yet another medical discipline – pre-palliative care.

Mackenzie takes us on his journey with motor neurone disease (MND) from the day he was diagnosed, even the months before when it was mooted but still not proven – 'Oh, you'll have to wait for the MRI and, as it is not urgent, with the current waiting list that will be in 4-6 weeks'. It took eight. He and his family felt there was little positive support during these anxious weeks of waiting, especially through the extra delay period. Perhaps their doctor was just too busy – aren't we all, didn't inquire what concerns they might have, or had other things on his mind – don't we all?

'Macca' reminds us that we are all on a terminal pathway but the needs of those for whose predictable end is days or weeks away the issues of need are different for those whose end is

months, years or even decades away. Mackenzie pulls no punches concerning his relationships with health staff, or in his walk with himself and his family and friends. He tells it 'warts and all'.

As doctors we need constant reminders that it is not what we say to our patients and their relatives, although it often is, but what was heard. We need to make sure we find out what they 'heard'. We need to remind ourselves that we have a responsibility to ensure that they have access to the information they want and recognise that this may change with the course of their disease.

No doctor, indeed no health care worker, who deals with patients or carers of those with 'a terminal illness' should read this book. Be reminded, be humbled, be concerned, be directed, but be changed to become more thoughtful, choose words more carefully, explore where patients and their carers are at, be honest. After all we do call them 'my' patients.

*Anthony J Radford
Adelaide, SA*