

Oxford Handbook of General Practice, 4th edition

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Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014
ISBN 9780199671038, \$71.95

Not long ago I was hearing about the imminent demise of traditional textbooks of clinical medicine due to the explosion of mostly free material readily available on the Internet. But as any busy clinician knows, a quick search through 'Dr Google' is unlikely to provide evidence of sufficient quality, reliability and accuracy to assist in clinical decision-making while the patient is in the consulting room in front of you. This is where high-quality, trustworthy resources become invaluable. And key players in this arena are the medical handbooks published by Oxford University Press. Since the release of the *Oxford Handbook of Clinical Medicine* in 1985, the series has now grown to over 50 titles and has a powerful international presence at all levels of medical education.

The fourth edition of the *Oxford Handbook of General Practice* has just been released. Fortunately



this latest version is of similar length as the previous edition and while not exactly pocket-sized at almost 1200 pages, it sits comfortably on your desk. Another option may be the electronic version for your computer or handheld device, although only the third edition is currently available.

The information presented covers pretty much the breadth of clinical general practice, from acute

emergencies through chronic disease and palliative care. The format is straightforward and each topic is divided into small chunks of information with descriptive headings, occasional charts and tables, but few pictures. Rather than wordy descriptions, the information is succinct and clearly focused around clinical management; essentially, an ideal format to assist registrars-in-training during their busy day at the office or, equally, to assist the experienced general practitioner (GP) while encountering an unfamiliar problem.

Be aware that the authors are UK GPs and although this handbook is used across the globe, the book has a

very UK flavour and focus. Content is framed around UK guidelines and the UK GP training syllabus and learning environment. For those areas of medicine that are somewhat protocol-driven, such as resuscitation, the reader needs to be mindful that Australia has slightly different directives. Similarly, medication choices in Australia may be different for a variety of reasons. Nevertheless, I found the clinical content, overall, provides a very reasonable and appropriate approach for Australian conditions.

The first 100+ pages provide an interesting introduction to the UK GP landscape and personally I found this an interesting read. Although UK GPs have a different regulatory framework to Australia, it was interesting to reflect on the similarities and differences with Australia.

In summary, this is an excellent clinical resource for both registrars and experienced clinicians, albeit with a distinct UK flavor.

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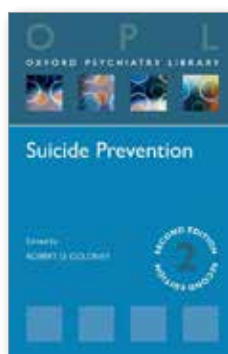
Suicide Prevention, 2nd edition

Robert D Goldney, AO

New York: Oxford University Press,
2013
ISBN 978 0199 677 580, \$40.95

What is the most common cause of death in the age groups 15–24, 25–34 and 35–44 years? The answer for each age group is suicide! Attempted suicide accounts for huge numbers of emergency presentations.

Following the Australian Bureau of Statistics survey, which reported that at least 13% of a randomly selected population had suicidal thoughts at some stage in their lives, this precise summary of current knowledge and clinical management deserves wide dissemination. This very readable book will greatly assist doctors dealing with this highly treatable but highly stressful condition. Professor Goldney, Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Adelaide, has written extensively



on suicide prevention, and has been a previous president of the International Association of Suicide Prevention.

This is a small book, both in page size and in the number of pages, but it is cleverly set out. Each chapter contains a number of informative summary boxes. This allows one to take a quick overview of the whole field and to read in more detail the

areas of particular interest.

The author covers the history and epidemiology of suicide in a very readable way, and then goes on to discuss the psychosocial and biochemical factors leading to suicidal actions. He covers the assessment of a patient who presents with suicidal ideas or at risk of suicide, and discusses both non-pharmacological and pharmacological approaches to their management. He draws attention to 'psychache', the intolerable emotional pain that leads sufferers to seek

unconsciousness as the only solution they can see to their pain. He stresses the importance of ensuring sleep in suicidal patients, to allow suicidal ideas to subside. This was a factor also emphasised by Kay Radfield-Jamison, a very prominent professor at Johns Hopkins Medical School, who publicly announced her own depression and her own suicide attempt.

The second edition of this book has placed more emphasis on clinical issues with a chapter on 'Frequently Asked Questions' and another chapter on 'Clinical Examples'.

I cannot recommend this book highly enough for those with a concern about suicide prevention, ranging from professionals to the large number of concerned individuals in the community, who will find this book clear and easy to understand.

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