

Pain and Its Relief Without Addiction—Clinical Issues in the Use of Opioids and Other Analgesics, BARRY STIMMEL. The Haworth Medical Press, an imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc., New York, London, 1997. No. of Pages including index: 418.

"I observed that . . . persons in pain still receive less than satisfactory relief." Awareness of the inadequacies of pain treatments prompted the latest work of Dr Barry Stimmel. He sets out to provide a comprehensive overview of drugs used in the treatment of all pain. He covers well many central issues, as he determined in his title. He acknowledges that the information may appear excessive whilst at the same time he volunteers that exceptionally detailed information is omitted. Indeed, the extent of detail is remarkable. Extensive lists of references are included at the end of each chapter. Illustrations and tables are given throughout.

The pharmacological details are preceded by an overview of the anatomy, physiology and psychology of pain on which to hang the principles of pain control. They are followed by chapters on acute, chronic and malignant pain, and pain in particular groups of patients. A further introductory chapter on dependence, addiction, tolerance and withdrawal could have been written by none other than an expert. Throughout there

is a discussion surrounding issues and treatment of addiction.

The book aims to address physicians, health care personnel and the informed public. This is a difficult, perhaps impossible task. Detail enough to satisfy the physician is likely to overface the public.

The separate clinical entities of acute and chronic pain are identified, but treatment specific to each needs also to be identified more clearly as such. Specific treatments for chronic neuropathic pain could be highlighted as they are discussed. Dr Stimmel's estimation of the place of some drugs in clinical usage may not reflect world wide thinking. For the Old Age Psychiatrist the attraction of the book lies in its discussion of the multifactorial aetiology of pain, the role of central nervous system transmitters, the use of antidepressants, the overlap between pain and depression and issues of addiction. Principles of management are given too, although the arrangements can make practical guidance difficult to retrieve.

Without doubt, the book offers superb detail and stimulating reading in a fast developing area of medicine.

KATHRYN M. GRADY

*Consultant in Chronic Pain Relief and Anaesthesia,
South Manchester University Hospitals' NHS Trust*