



“inner man,” did not deign to confront physical malaise, leaving it to others to address psyche and soma, which is what one hopes true healing involves.

Throughout the book it is evident that healing is a continuing process, unique to each individual, usually requiring change of some sort, which can be facilitated by a variety of means. It is not a single event.

David Gerring, MD
Vancouver, BC

On the Shoulders of Giants: Eponyms and Names in Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Thomas F. Baskett. 270 pp. Illust. Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, London, England. 1996. Price not stated. ISBN 0-902331-94-9

Overall rating: Excellent
Strengths: Covers the enormous field remarkably well
Weaknesses: None
Audience: Anyone interested in medical history, particularly obstetricians, gynecologists, midwives and obstetric nurses

Dr. Baskett has done an exemplary job in assembling the information available in this book. He has then managed the even more difficult task of presenting it in a manner that makes it eminently readable.

The format is alphabetical, and, in most cases, photographs are presented. The eponym or work for which these giants are remembered is described, followed by biographical data, which is helpful in returning them to human size.

I see that Bassett, like myself, gets more interested in history with advancing maturity, and I should warn him that the next step is that we re-

member more and more of what our colleagues regard as history.

Two consistent points recur throughout the book:

1. With many of the eponyms there is some doubt as to which name would be most appropriately applied.
2. Humility was not a common personality trait in many of our great predecessors.

My congratulations to Dr. Baskett on a job well done.

C.H. Opie, MB, BS
Pinawa, Man.

The Pocket Guide to Critical Appraisal: A Handbook for Health Care Professionals

Iain K. Crombie. 66 pp. BMJ Publishing Group, London. 1996. Distributed in Canada by the Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa. \$28.95 (\$23.95 CMA members). ISBN 0-7279-1099-X

Overall rating: Very good
Strengths: Concise, understandable, informative; reader-friendly; useful checklists
Weaknesses: Lack of references. Limited number of study types addressed: surveys, case-control and cohort studies, clinical trials and reviews
Audience: Medical students, postgraduate trainees, practising clinicians

Dr. Crombie has created a valuable and useful resource.

The pocket guide contains 2 parts. The initial 5 chapters are a general introduction to the rationale and conduct of critical appraisal. Although this section can be omitted by experienced appraisers, it effectively and efficiently addresses several important issues. It includes a discussion of the various sections of a paper and the questions that should be considered for each; a description of the

characteristics of surveys, case-control and cohort studies and clinical trials; and an overview of fundamental concepts required to interpret study results — data analysis, bias and confounding.

The concluding 6 chapters provide detailed, annotated checklists of questions to guide the critical appraisal of surveys, case-control and cohort studies, clinical trials and reviews. Examples of the questions asked: Are the aims [of the study] clearly stated? Are the measurements likely to be valid and reliable? Do the numbers add up? and What implications does the study have for your practice? The explanations of the appraisal questions are not only informative, they are written in a simple, user-friendly manner.

The book has 2 limitations, both identified by its author. First, it contains no references. This is in stark contrast to the many useful references found in an alternative resource: the “Users’ Guides to the Medical Literature” series, initiated in the Nov. 3, 1993, issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The second concern is that only a limited number of study types are addressed. Scenarios such as diagnostic tests, qualitative methods and decision analyses were omitted to ensure that the book remained a simple-to-use pocket guide.

I highly recommend this book as a valuable resource to assist in the critical appraisal of the health sciences literature. It not only is useful for health sciences trainees and critical appraisal novices, but is also an easy-to-carry, valuable reference for their more experienced counterparts.

Bart J. Harvey, MD, PhD
Assistant Professor and
Director, Community Medicine
Residency Program
Department of Public Health Sciences
Faculty of Medicine
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ont.