on their review and experience. The information synthesis method does not avoid subjectivity in conclusions in the way that full statistical meta-analysis might. Nevertheless, researchers will appreciate specific and focused recommendations for future directions of investigation, and policy makers will find strengths and weaknesses of various approaches to health care delivery enlightening and helpful.

The array of topics is quite broad, and while each chapter is informative and well-written, the whole project risks being a hodgepodge of unrelated realms when viewed at arm's length, a feature common to such multiauthored projects. For example, the chapter on osteoporosis seems out of place: why not a general chapter on disease prevention or, alternatively, more chapters on other clinical topics (dementia, cancer, cardiovascular disease, or nutrition)? Not amenable to cover-to-cover reading, this book rather serves as a reference, and most readers will want to concentrate on one or two chapters directly relevant to their areas of interest.

It is always difficult to reflect the "state of the art" in a timely fashion in a book, especially one with many authors expending the effort necessary to complete the required in-

formation synthesis by the methods outlined. Almost all of the conclusions are based on literature published in the 1970s and early 1980s (and therefore based on data older still). This time lag is more problematic for some topics than others. I suspect that almost all of the authors could name more than one recent paper they wished they could have incorporated in their syntheses. It would be useful to repeat the syntheses every half-decade or so to serve as an ongoing, dynamic resource in the same manner as frequent editions of the major textbooks of medicine serve physicians. I recommend the *Source Book* as a useful tool for health services researchers, gerontologists, and health policy makers, as well as for students of information synthesis methodology. —WAYNE C. MCCORMICK, MD, MPH, *Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholar, University of Washington, Seattle, WA*

Reference

1. Hedrick SC, Koepsell TD, Inui TS. Meta-analysis of home-care effects on mortality and nursing home placement. *Med Care.* 1989;27:1015-26.

CORRECTION

Barbiturates and Alcohol Withdrawal

A typographical error appeared in a letter to the editor by Robert Matz, "Barbiturates and Alcohol Withdrawal," that appeared in the March/April issue (*J Gen Intern Med* 1990;5:182). The last sentence in the fifth paragraph should read: "Phenobarbital may be substituted for the pentobarbital (especially the evening dose; 30–60 mg of phenobarbital is approximately equivalent to 100 mg of pentobarbital)."