Linda J. Dodds: Drugs in use, case studies for pharmacists and prescribers

5th Edition, The pharmaceutical Press, London, 2013, Official price: £39,99 (it can be wise to shop around!), ISBN: 978 0 85711 091 6

J. W. F. van Mil

Received: 6 October 2013 / Accepted: 10 October 2013 / Published online: 27 October 2013
© Koninklijke Nederlandse Maatschappij ter bevordering der Pharmacie 2013

The book 'Drugs in use' focusses on clinical skills, and that is a very useful area for modern pharmacists, both in hospital as well as community. The book offers a very wide variety of speciality case histories in many different fields of pharmacotherapy, some applicable in a clinical setting, others in community. There have been at least 40 contributors who have brought together the cases, and that can be noticed. The style of the case descriptions is not always homogeneous.

When I was scanning through the book, I got 'stuck' easily by the instructive and fascinating case descriptions. I met patients that I would, in my practice, never know so many details of and this annoyed me at first. On further reading I just noticed that I was learning new things, and this probably is the strength of the book. It helps to translate abstract knowledge into applicable clinical expertise.

According to the introduction, the book targets especially independent pharmacist prescribers and pharmacists providing medication reviews and performing clinical roles. Well, as Editor in Chief of an international journal, I cannot but think that this book then is not for me. There are no independent pharmacist prescribers outside the UK, and I also know of very few pharmacists really performing clinical roles. So, this makes the book really only useful for

the UK market. While I do teach medication review in the community, the basis of most cases in the book are national NICE guidelines and it is assumed that laboratory values are at hand. Unfortunately, every developed country still has its own treatment guidelines for most diseases, and most pharmacists (even in hospital) cannot lay their hands on for instance, laboratory values or proper diagnoses.

Conclusion

'Drugs in use' provides a good read for pharmacists who are interested in pharmacotherapy. However, it is not very suitable to be used to promote pharmacotherapy and clinical skills in an international setting, since the developed skills are hardly being asked from pharmacists in the rest of the world. And I am not even sure about the UK setting. If I walk through the average shopping street in the United Kingdom and see the small community pharmacies, I cannot but doubt that my colleagues there would benefit from the vast knowledge in this book. The best use of the book would probably be made by clinical pharmacists in hospital settings, and the few independent prescribers that are currently really practicing.

J. W. F. van Mil (✉)
Margrietlaan 1, Zuidlaren, The Netherlands
e-mail: jwfvml@planet.nl