

Management of Clinical Problems in Primary Care/Family Medicine

Editor: Prof Dato' Dr R Balasundaram

Department of Family Medicine, Melaka Manipal Medical College, Jalan Batu Hampar, Bukit Baru, 75150 Melaka

Prof. Dato' Dr R Balasundaram is fast becoming the most prolific author of medical books in the local scene. This is his fifth book. He previously published two editions of a book he entitled "Clinical Problems in Primary Care/Family Medicine in 1998 and 2007. He calls this a sequel which focuses on the management of these problems and covers many areas not dealt with in the previous books.

Management of Clinical Problems in Primary Care/Family Medicine 2008 is a practical, easy to read book with concise evidence-based facts, accompanied by journal references and relevant websites. It is a must read for Family Physicians and para-medical personnel who work locally in both the public and private sectors. Its practical and comprehensive coverage of everyday problems will meet the needs of the Family Physician who is pressed for time and busy.

All the major areas of Family Medicine are covered in 280 clinical problems under 23 chapters. Cardiovascular problems, respiratory problems and infectious disease occupy the first third of the book. 'Metabolic and endocrine problems' is the second longest chapter. Dermatology has the most topics. Minor topics such as halitosis, urticaria, travel medicine and erection dysfunction are not forgotten. The surgical section however, is very short, with only ten pages and he does not discuss doing surgical procedures, such as suturing, wound care, and minor operations Family Physicians may be required to do. The section on Oncology is short. In addition, some cancers are discussed under their

respective physiological systems but cancer prevention, screening, cancer demography and the burden it is on health care is not strongly addressed.

Palliative Care is discussed but dealing with how patients go for alternative unproven treatment is a real problem in primary care that is a black hole probably nobody has explored enough to write about. Overall, what this book lacks in illustrations, graphics and tables, it makes up by its compact manual size format, suitable for quick reference.

The book is written as concise lecture notes, often with bullet points and numbered lists. Instead of flowing prose the author's aim seems to be to communicate as much information as possible with an economy of words in a form that is easy to remember. This will suit most Primary Care Physicians who need, not eloquent arguments but, to cope with so many relevant facts in practice today. To back up the information given the book is scattered with many references. These are not collected at the end of chapters or at the back of the book as textbooks have by convention, but in the relevant section for easy access and convenience.

Family Physicians in touch with the Australian Family Medicine scene will mostly be familiar with John Murtagh. In our 'Malaysia Boleh' spirit we have Prof Dr Balasundaram.

**Reviewed by: Dr Lim Hock Ghee, FRACGP
80 Barrack Road, 34000 Taiping**