

For personal use only

Not to be reproduced without the permission of the *Primary Care Respiratory Journal*

## Wellcome Witnesses to Medicine Volume 1 : Childhood Asthma and Beyond

Edited By L.A. Reynolds, E.M.

### Review by Duncan Keele

This book provides a fascinating insight into the recent history of the diagnosis and treatment of asthma in childhood. The Wellcome Trust created a History of Twentieth Century Medicine Group in 1990, and this is one of a series of Witness Seminars bringing together groups of key participants in different areas of medical progress to discuss how that progress came about. So under the chairmanship of Professor Simon Godfrey we have the reminiscences of people such as Donald Lane, Tim Clark, Mike Silverman, Greta Barnes, Sir David Jack (developer of salbutamol and beclomethasone with Allen and Hanbury) - and our own Mark Levy and Paul McCarthy. Chris O'Callaghan provides some early historical background leading up to the first administration of nebulised adrenaline by a certain Dr Camps, surgeon to the Teddington Cottage Hospital

Amid the broad sweep of the development of the ideas and the treatments we are familiar with it is the little details and sidelines that particularly catch one's attention - like the use of morphine for treating asthma that had not completely gone out of fashion by 1973, when John Warner recalled that as a registrar at Queen Elizabeth's Hospital in Hackney he had to carefully steer children admitted with acute asthma away from one particular consultant who insisted that treatment of his patients should include a dose of morphine. Another delight was to learn that the original idea of the pressurised metered dose inhaler came from a 13 year old American asthmatic girl who in 1955 asked her doctor father "Why can't they put my asthma medicine in a spray can like they do with hair spray?"

Roger Altounyan - asthma sufferer, former Spitfire pilot and discoverer of the anti-asthma properties of sodium cromoglycate - is remembered with great affection by several of the participants. Altounyan who in earlier life went on sailing holidays in the Lake District with Arthur Ransome and was the model for Roger in Swallows and Amazons vehemently opposed the use of steroids for asthma which he believed would cause overgrowth with Candida. Simon Godfrey at one point recalls Altounyan wheezing away and taking repeated puffs from his spinhaler without noticeable effect. Godfrey said to him - "Why not try taking some steroids?" Presumably, though this is not recounted, he got a dusty answer

All manner of interesting topics get a going over - the original development of Ventolin and Becotide (how many other drugs of that vintage - 1969 and 1972 are still worldwide mainstays of the treatment of the condition they were invented to treat?), the beta-agonist controversy of the early 1990s, the place of allergy and allergy testing in asthma, the development of the National Asthma Campaign and the development of the nursing role in asthma care spearheaded by Greta Barnes

Anyone interested in asthma would enjoy reading this: it is presented simply as a transcript of the spoken contributions, with foot notes providing helpful potted biographies of the participants and other persons mentioned. The atmosphere is one of friendly respect - with occasional glimpses of the firm that still underlies some of the important controversies ■

### Duncan Keele

Correspondence to  
Dr Duncan Keele  
General Practitioner  
The Health Centre,  
East Street,  
Thame  
Oxon OX9 3JZ

Tel: +44 (0)1844 26106  
Fax: +44 (0)1844 26034

mc23@dial.pipex.co

Date submitted: 10/07/0  
Date Accepted: 06/08/0

Prim Care Resp 2002  
11(3) 510

## COPD in Primary Care, New 2nd edition David Bellamy and Rachel Booker £24.9

All you need to know about managing COPD in your practice

Class Publishing have just published a new, fully-updated second edition of COPD in Primary Care. This clear and helpful handbook addresses the management requirements of GPs and practice nurses, showing you how to manage COPD in primary care - successfully and with worthwhile outcomes for your patients. In this book, you will find guidance, protocols, plans and tests - all appropriate to the primary care situation - that will streamline your diagnosis and management of COPD

In addition to updating all the information in the first edition, this new edition contains

- A new chapter on the International, evidence based GOLD Guidelines with cross-references to them throughout the book
- A greatly expanded section on natural history and treatment of exacerbation
- The latest update on new drug therapy

### READER DISCOUNT OFFER

Readers can buy COPD in Primary Care (Class Publishing) for £22.99 inc p&p - saving £5 on the normal mail order price!  
To order call hotline 01752 202 301 or send a cheque to Class Publishing (Priority Service), FREEPOST (PAM6219), Plymouth PL6 7ZZ.  
You must quote Ref COPD02 when you place your order