

Alison Blenkinsopp and Paul Paxton. Symptoms in the Pharmacy 4th Edition

Oxford: Blackwell Science Ltd, 2001. 303 pages
paperback. £24.95.
ISBN: 0-63205-906-0

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In 1989 in the immediate post-Nuffield Report days, Alison Blenkinsopp and Paul Paxton published the first edition of *Symptoms in the Pharmacy*. It was exactly what hard pressed community pharmacists, pharmacy pre-registration tutors, pharmacy practice lecturers, pre-registration pharmacists and pharmacy undergraduates needed. The same can be said for this most recent edition.

The format which the authors adopted for that first edition proved ideal, and going on the adage “if it isn’t broken don’t fix it” this fourth edition is presented using the same formula. That is not to say that the authors have rested on their laurels. Very aware that any textbook dealing with health, pharmaceutical and medical matters very quickly becomes out of date, they have revised and updated the text and included some useful new material. Evidence based medicine and practice are acknowledged and the introductory chapter, “How to use this book” now includes a section on “Effectiveness of treatments” with useful website addresses for PRODIGY, SIGN guidelines and NICE. With CPD being a priority for all practising pharmacists this is a welcome addition to an already excellent chapter. There is often a tendency with reference books to miss out the introductory sections and go straight to the chapter dealing with the specific area of interest. I would encourage all readers to spend time

perusing the introduction to this book: it contains much of major interest and importance and is presented in a highly readable and practical style.

The system of presenting “cases” at the end of many of the sections, where both a pharmacist’s view and a GP’s view is given, has been retained and I am delighted to see an increase in the number of these cases. These are extremely useful learning tools for pharmacy undergraduates and provide an excellent reference source for practising pharmacists.

A chapter on emergency hormonal contraception (EHC) is one of the main additions to this fourth edition. Whilst acknowledging that EHC is not a treatment for a “symptom”, the authors justify the inclusion of this chapter. It has been identified that dealing with requests for EHC requires the pharmacist to employ a considerable range of skills ranging from communication and interpersonal skills to a thorough knowledge of the product and its appropriate use. They have, as ever, collected all the relevant information and presented it in a logical, comprehensive format with the additional underpinning of three cases. Most community pharmacists should have access to much of the information presented in this chapter but it is unlikely to be presented in such a compact and easily accessible way.

In today’s world, time is becoming an increasingly scarce commodity in all our working lives. One of the enormous benefits of this book is that due to its reader-friendly layout, the information it provides is readily accessed and assimilated. It should be a required text for all pharmacy undergraduates and preregistration pharmacists. Many community pharmacists will already have copies of the previous editions, but, because of the significant updating of material in this most recent edition and the useful additions already referred to, this current book is a “must” and should be a well thumbed text in all community pharmacies.

**Gordon E Applebe, Joy Wingfield, Lindsay Taylor,
Practical Exercises in Pharmacy Law and Ethics
(2nd Edition)**

London: Pharmaceutical Press, 2002. 236 pages
paperback. £19.95.
ISBN 0 85369 522 9

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Dale and Applebe's Pharmacy Law and Ethics has long been the definitive text book of pharmacy law. For the first time in 1998 a companion text consisting of practical exercises in pharmacy law and ethics was published. I was immediately impressed with this book and have therefore awaited with some eagerness the second edition, which has been designed to complement the latest edition of Pharmacy Law and Ethics (published in 2001).

I am pleased to report the new edition does not disappoint. First impressions suggest little change to the layout and structure, for which I am grateful as I feel these were very positive features of the first edition. I particularly like the clear introduction, which sets out who the exercises are aimed at and the learning objectives and outcomes for each level of exercise. The idea of using question styles that mimic those used in the RPSGB registration examination certainly makes this a valuable text for those students undertaking their preregistration training.

The content of the book remains generally consistent with that of the first edition but, as would be expected, it has been revised and updated to ensure that it reflects the current legal and ethical situation. There are three levels of exercise in the book and each covers slightly different aspects and is aimed at different groups. I certainly agree with the authors that the level one questions covering pharmacy law are well suited for undergraduates and that the level two questions are well suited for undergraduates and preregistration students. However, I would

hope that the level three problems, which it is stated are aimed at registered pharmacists, should be able to be successfully completed by undergraduates towards the end of their degree course and certainly by preregistration students before they register.

The level one questions remain broadly the same as those in the first edition with just minor updating and revision. The questions remain very factual with clear cut answers and thus provide an excellent revision aid for all. The level two questions dealing with the Code of Ethics certainly will make you think, as they explore the concept of professional judgement and the need to justify your actions. They are very thought provoking and very useful particularly for those ascending the steps towards registration. The inclusion of a question on the 'tenets' of clinical governance was most welcome (and very challenging!) as it allows readers to examine scenarios and try to identify which tenet is the priority one in each case. This question certainly allows you to explore how clinical governance relates to real practice rather than seeing it as just another concept with a fancy name and a list of things you have to do!

The level three problems focus very much on professional decision making, and the framework used by the authors as an example of how to approach this sometimes daunting concept is both logical and comprehensive. It will certainly help students of pharmacy to develop the skills of organising their thoughts and applying their knowledge in a logical and structured manner. The number of problems at level three has been increased in this new edition and they all remain very realistic examples of situations where decisions have to be made on a daily basis.

In conclusion, this edition builds on the strengths of the first edition. It is a very useful text especially for those who are undergraduate students, preregistration students, newly qualified pharmacists or those returning to practice. I would like to say it should be on the bookshelf of every undergraduate and preregistration student, but this would be doing a disservice to the book: it most definitely should not be on the bookshelf, it should be off the bookshelf, opened and dog-eared from continuous use!