

Book reviews

Drinking: Anthropological Approaches. Anthropology of Food and Nutrition, vol. 4. I. De Garine and V. De Garine (editors). Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books. 2001. Hardback: \$69.95, £47.00. ISBN 1-57181-809-X. Paperback: \$25.00, £17.00. ISBN 1-57181-315-2.

Anthropologists have long since recognised that not only is food necessary for human subsistence, but it also offers invaluable insights into the ways in which we organise our societies and our worlds (e.g. Douglas & Isherwood, 1979; MacClancy, 1992). MacClancy (1992) quotes Levi-Strauss as saying: 'Food is not only good to eat, but also good to think with.' De Garine and De Garine have now extended this idea to drink.

Drinking: Anthropological Approaches is a wide-ranging edited volume, presenting multi-disciplinary views of the meanings and significance of drinking in a variety of contexts worldwide. It seeks to bring together new perspectives on the biological and nutritional implications of ingesting different liquids with social meanings and interpretations. The different chapters draw on a wide range of geographical and social contexts, to produce a fascinating mosaic. Issues covered range from the introduction of non-breast-milk weaning fluids to East African pastoralist infants, to alcoholism in different communities on Ile de la Réunion in the Indian ocean, to changing patterns of milk consumption among urban Europeans, and beyond.

The editors seek to overcome the narrowness of previous works on the anthropology of drinking, which have tended to focus almost exclusively either on the social aspects of alcohol consumption, or on biochemical analyses of drink in a nutritional context. The editors' attempt to do so is both laudable and successful. However, at times one wonders whether the volume risks becoming too disparate. Despite a good introductory chapter, which directs the reader to the vast inter-disciplinary nature of the relationships between people and drinking, at times it becomes hard to make connections between the various papers, and to identify any general themes.

That said, this is both an interesting and highly enjoyable volume, which should prove valuable both to researchers and to those teaching courses that span the bio-social divide. It certainly provides lots of food (or drink?) for thought!

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Intestinal Failure. Edited by Jeremy M. D. Nightingale. London, Greenwich Medical Media. 2001. £89.50.

'Intestinal failure' (IF) is a relatively new term. It has usually been applied to patients with gut function reduced to a point at which they can no longer sustain nutritional and/or fluid requirements. It has therefore been applied most frequently to patients requiring parenteral nutrition. In this book, Jeremy Nightingale expands the definition to add patients whose gut can sustain them if nutrient or fluid supplements such as salt solutions or intermittent nasogastric tube feeding are used. The book's remit thus becomes much wider and IF is examined as one would any other organ failure, e.g. cardiac or renal. Patients can have acute *v.* chronic IF, reversible or irreversible IF, and partial or complete IF. Causes, consequences and treatments are examined within this framework.

The book is large and comprises several sections. An initial 'Background' section gives both an historical overview and a useful summary chapter on the normal structure and function of the gut, which grants a basic scientific understanding when it comes to the causes, consequences and treatment of IF. The next section on 'Acute intestinal failure' contains two chapters on surgical issues such as mesenteric infarct, stomas and high-output fistulae, but these do not contain detailed discussion of protracted ileus. I feel that this is an omission since extended post-operative ileus is the commonest cause of temporary IF. Nevertheless, as with all chapters in the book, those dealing with surgery are excellently written and illustrated. In the same 'Acute intestinal failure' section comes a chapter on IF associated with aggressive chemotherapy for haematological problems. This is invaluable for the many health professionals working in the nutrition-support teams of larger hospitals, and who now meet this cause of IF frequently. The final part of the 'Acute intestinal failure' section covers HIV infection. It is perhaps a surprise in a book that does not cover IF related to other medical conditions such as coeliac disease or small-bowel overgrowth and, furthermore, might have fitted better in the 'Chronic intestinal failure' section that follows. Having said this, the chapter is also of a very high standard.

The 'Chronic intestinal failure' section contains first-class 'expected' pieces on short-bowel problems in adults and children, the latter incorporating other causes of young onset IF. However, there are also chapters on radiation enteritis, gastric surgery, surgery for obesity, and small-bowel dysfunction. I think that the last will prove particularly helpful for the many gastroenterologists and gastrointestinal surgeons who find that the small numbers of these patients create a disproportionate number of clinical difficulties.

The next two sections of the book deal with the consequences and treatment of IF. The first contains chapters on undernutrition, gall stones, renal stones and intestinal

adaptation, while the latter covers enteral and parenteral access techniques and the formulation of appropriate feeding regimens. There is also a chapter on the nursing and psychological aspects of care and two further chapters returning to the management of short-bowel, one addressing high-output jejunostomy and the other the dietary treatment of such patients. This arrangement permits one further small criticism of this generally exceptional book. The division of some topics across many sections leads to both some degree of repetition and the need to read several chapters to gain appreciation of all considerations relating to a topic such as 'short-bowel'.

The 'Outcome of intestinal failure' section contains chapters on home parenteral nutrition in adults and children, the setting up and assessment of such services, and a striking account written by a patient about living with IF. There is then a section on the 'Problems of treatment', both enteral and parenteral, and a final section on the

surgical treatment of chronic IF using techniques such as bowel lengthening or intestinal transplantation.

Thus, it can be seen that this book provides a wealth of general information for individuals of any profession involved with nutrition support in any context. It also contains some really detailed information of benefit to both specialist gastrointestinal surgeons and physicians who look after patients with these very difficult conditions. At nearly £90 it is not cheap, but I recommend it highly. It certainly puts IF firmly on the map.

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