Book Review: Principles and Practice of Nurse Prescribing: Gould and Bain

By Sharon Rees

This will be a useful and highly relevant resource for independent prescribers, whether they are clinicians considering a refresher, or student/newly qualified NMPs who need a reference text. The chapters are structured around the Royal Pharmaceutical Society competencies, but the information is also applied to nursing professional standards. This additional layer of integration means that the competency framework can be considered in a profession-specific way, facilitating understanding through the lens of the examples and cases provided. While the various nursing disciplines are used in the examples, the perspective can often be applicable to other prescribers.

Constructed by multi-professional experts, there are 8 Chapters plus a glossary, covering the central areas in prescribing, bar rationale decision making and therapeutics of the drugs themselves. The chapters are all structured around the competencies; therefore, all the principles of prescribing practice are covered. This is a helpful layout, which is consistent through each chapter, guiding the reader from the key /underpinning principles(s) and into exploration of the topic.

The style is contemporary and accomplishes the right blend of historical developments with current thinking and practice. The approach should add value to a prescribing clinician at any stage of practice, because the themes are expanded in an organic way; a sound overview is provided, and then there is ‘drill down’ into detail where applicable. The reader can engage at various levels with this, allowing browsing and dipping in for specific information.

Strengths of this book include the structure and interactive style, with underpinning of concepts with visual aids and models. The online version is very interactive and allows you to create flashcards, or annotate the text, supporting revision or CPD. Further advantages include the broad scope of topics, as well as the context of current thinking in the respective fields. The activities encourage reflection and provision of the model answers is also supported by exploration of the key themes as you advance through a chapter.

In drawing together themes around a case (s), the book aims for a practical approach with theoretical underpinning. This is generally achieved, although some Chapters at or approaching 10,000 words can seem quite long. Nonetheless, justice is done to the discursive and complex topics involving legal, ethical and governance themes and certainly this text brings together all the information needed to gain insight into these subjects.

While the book expands in multiple areas of nursing practice, it is less suited to other prescribing professions. However, it is relatively simple to apply the scenarios to other areas of practice, especially as the principles on which the cases are based are detailed and well-referenced.

This book is not to be used as a pharmacology text, as the general principles are explained, but not drug therapeutics. The approach taken in Chapter 5 is to outline the pharmacological concept(s) and then to apply the knowledge in a clinical scenario to foster understanding. The pharmacology chapter does achieve this, but the book cannot be used as a manual for prescribing decisions. Moreover, other sources would need to be used for related practical skills, such as drug calculations. In places, the information in Chapter 5 seems a little too basic, such as descriptions of cell structure and organelles, which can be found elsewhere and may detract from the focus.

In conclusion, the book takes a holistic and grounded approach to the complexities of modern prescribing practice. This textbook will be a valuable addition to the resources available for non-medical prescribers and in particular, those from the nursing disciplines.