

There is a growing demand for changes in the maternity services, and an increasing number of women who think that delivery at home, rather than in a hospital, would be more to their liking. *The Place of Birth* gives reasons for changes in the services and makes interesting reading for anyone interested in the continuation of general practitioner obstetrics as a personal service. It is needed even more by some specialist obstetricians, such as the registrar, for instance, who recently voiced his personal opinion that every woman in labour should be in a specialist hospital, wired up to a fetal monitor.

M. I. COOKSON

## PSYCHOLOGY AND MEDICINE

*S. J. Rachman and Clare Philips*

*Penguin Books  
Harmondsworth  
188 pages. Price 90p*

I find many Monday mornings a great trial. I begin with good intentions but my patience is gradually worn down by recurrent patient problems such as marital disharmony, headaches, dizzy feelings, and insomnia.

The problem for me is frustration. I come to derive great joy, almost sensual pleasure, from diagnosing and treating a lobar pneumonia or an unsuspected hypothyroidism.

What a happy coincidence, then, that *Psychology and Medicine* should arrive through the post on a particularly gruelling Monday! The authors seemed to appreciate my situation immediately and I became engrossed.

They begin by highlighting many of the problems in medicine and particularly in general practice, such as the changing nature of demands on family practitioners, increasing consumption of medication, and the failure of patients to follow doctor's orders amongst others.

They go on to argue the place of psychologists in educating both doctors and patients to appreciate the importance of self-care, and lay down guidelines for more effective patient/doctor communication and understanding. There are extremely interesting chapters on pain control, sleep disturbances, and anxiety abatement, all written from a refreshingly new angle, which I found most stimulating.

Strangely enough, the chapter on psychology in psychiatric medicine is

the least rewarding, the free style of the rest of the book being cramped by more complex phraseology and arguments over diagnoses and disciplinary responsibility for patient care.

Throughout the book emphasis is laid on the doctor's need to communicate more freely with his patient and the rewards which this brings. There is growing evidence that a patient prepared for illness, pain, or operation requires less medication, recovers more quickly, and shows less emotional disturbance as a result. Patients pay more attention to what we say than we may think. Indeed patients' greatest single complaint is lack of information from the doctor about their illness. Psychologists have the training and ability to help doctors in many spheres of patient care: regrettably, as the authors point out, the numbers willing or able to do so are as yet too small.

I hope that this book is widely read, as it deserves to be, and if many of its ideas are implemented Monday mornings may never be the same again.

JOHN DRUMMOND

## CLINICAL PRACTICE AND ECONOMICS

*C. I. Phillips and J. N. Wolfe (Eds)*

*Pitman Medical  
London (1977)*

*223 pages. Price £2.95*

In their introduction to this collection of authoritative essays the editors state: "It is one of our basic premises that greater economy and efficiency in the use of clinical resources is desirable and possible." Most practising doctors would agree with this philosophy and they will find much to interest them in this review of the problems of cost in medical care.

The book is in four parts. The first deals with clinical practice and consists of nine essays covering such topics as the randomized clinical trial, primary care, paediatrics, preventive medicine, and the cost of rescue and survival, and ends with a comment upon the painful facts surrounding choice in health care.

Part two relates to diagnosis and clinical decision making. The third part is about the cost of prescribing, and the use of drugs and drug advertising; and the final part contains two comments upon research in the biomedical sciences.

The book is rounded off by an epilogue written by the editors which sets out 10 suggestions for long-term economies in clinical practice.

One of the essays in the first part is by John Fry, in which he states that there is an abysmal lack of reliable and relevant facts upon which to base decisions for planning and action, that there is a lack of understanding of the implications of the facts that are available, and that even when the results of studies are clear and self-evident the lessons are not applied.

It has been said that if exploration of the unknown were to cease and instead we were to apply properly that which has already been discovered, greater progress would be achieved. While such a concept is arguable there can be no doubt that we have now entered upon an era when the cost of what we are doing is becoming doubly important, both in monetary terms and in the non-monetary terms of suffering and deprivation. This book will stimulate many to think and is cheap enough to be bought by every doctor in the NHS.

H. W. K. ACHESON

## THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE IN SCOTLAND 1948-1978

*Scottish Home and Health  
Department*

*HMSO  
Edinburgh (1978)*

*35 pages. Free of charge*

A brief booklet of a mere 35 pages warrants only a brief review. Scotland would hate to be referred to as a microcosm of England but it has a balance, surely, of some of the best of Britain's rural features together with its share of urban problems. Its Health Service, though set up and organized under separate Acts of Parliament, has developed very much in parallel with the main Health Service and the production of this book is a facet of its continuing independence. There are few important differences between the services.

This booklet was produced for distribution to the 15 health boards which administer the service in Scotland. It is part explanatory and part self-congratulatory and tells the well-informed worker in the NHS little that he does not already know. It is, incidentally, a particularly well-produced publication with really excellent photographs although the type is rather small. However, the question remains—who is it really written for? It is probably most suitable for junior trainees in any discipline who have an interest in working in Scotland.

MALCOLM AYLETT