language. It is also well up to date in recent trends, although it does not trace the development of knowledge from the past to the present. Being psychologists, the authors possibly linger too long over some of the more esoteric psychological treatment methods.

This is not a ready-made handbook for general practitioners—such a book has not been written yet. However, the information given here can be adapted to the needs of most family doctors who wish to identify and understand the problem drinkers in their practices.

The management of alcoholics depends first of all on the ability to recognize them, and then to draw them into discussion about the impact of their drinking on their own health and that of their family. For this, basic knowledge of the facts about alcoholism is essential and reading this short book may help.

B. POLLACK

DERMATOLOGY 3rd EDITION

J. S. Pegum and Harvey Baker

Baillière Tindall
London (1979)
278 pages. Price £4.95

This is the third edition of a book by two dermatologists from the London Hospital Skin Department. It epitomizes a standard revision text for students in that it is concise to the point of making it rather dull.

The first 40 pages are concerned with the principles of skin biology, diagnosis, and treatment. The sections which follow on viral, bacterial, fungal, and parasitic diseases contain all the conventional information, but ringworms are particularly well explained. Drug eruptions are comprehensively covered for a book of this size, though the presentation is really an elaborate list.

A pleasing aspect is the space given in each section to the pathogenesis and pathology of each skin condition, and in future one might expect even more detail. Sections on the nails, hair, and sweat glands are tucked away at the back, a position they do not merit in view of their common presentation.

The book is peculiarly deficient in what could be called general practice dermatology; for example, the range of rashes one sees with rubella, measles, and glandular fever is not discussed and some common conditions which can be intriguing in general practice (such as squash players' heel) are not mentioned. Although this criticism may be nit-picking it is a sign that the book is really intended for hospital dermatologists.

The style of writing is clipped with an occasional humorous comment. There are some good black and white photographs and a few colour plates, but I feel this is totally inadequate: dermatology is very much a visual subject and more photographs especially in colour would do much to enhance the value of the book.

A. P. PRESLEY

EVERYDAY PSYCHIATRY

John Ashton

Update Books
London (1980)
126 pages. Price £5.95

Writing textbooks about specialist subjects in general practice is very difficult and there have been few successes: either the book is written by a hospital doctor who sees only an atypical representation of his specialty or a general practitioner who does not have the necessary depth of knowledge to be able to write on a specialist subject in such a way as to appeal to his colleagues.

This book is another attempt to bridge the gap between specialist knowledge and the reality of general practice and to a certain degree has been successful.

The text is readable and many case histories are given to show practical ways in which the psychiatrically ill patient can be helped in the community. There is also constant emphasis on the range of psychiatric illness from an exaggeration of normal behaviour to major psychotic problems.

The trainee in particular will find the guidelines in this book helpful when first coping with the vast number of patients with undifferentiated problems who present to him in the surgery. Where the book is of little help is in giving practical guidance to the inexperienced general practitioner on managing time in this sort of consultation. Skill in this can probably be acquired only through practical experience.

Inevitably, some subjects are treated fairly simply and more detailed advice on management may need to be sought elsewhere. For example, many general practitioners would not treat a child of five for enuresis.

This book is therefore recommended for vocational trainees and at £5.95 is comparatively cheap, although at a cost of being a soft back with poor quality paper.

K. J. BOLDEN

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES 3rd EDITION

Wilfrid H. Parry

Hodder and Stoughton
London (1979)
247 pages. Price £3.95

It seems that most medical textbooks take about six months' thought to put in a proper perspective. Fortunately, it is immediately obvious on reading this particular book that it is essential to every primary care physician. It is exceptionally primary care orientated and the clarity of explanation is beyond reproach.

After a short administrative section explaining the monitoring of infectious disease, the content is divided into airborne diseases, animal and pet transmitted diseases; it has useful chapters on foreign travel and immigrant diseases, and 20 pages of concise, highly selected information on tropical diseases. Each section deals with clinical and therapeutic aspects of individual diseases as well as bacteriology/virology, which adds immensely to its value. There is a comprehensive reference list at the end of each section.

Whooping cough is treated in a balanced and dispassionate way. My only criticism is the shortage of information on the very topical Campylobacter diarrhoea (which appears to be extremely common).

The presentation of the text is good, the content interesting and easy to read. It is a truly excellent volume and will probably be as popular as its previous editions.

A. P. PRESLEY

INVOLVING DOCTORS IN HEALTH EDUCATION ABOUT CANCER

D. J. Hill, M. W. Heffernan, and D. I. Rice (Eds)

International Union against Cancer (UICC)
Geneva (1979)
UICC Technical Report Series Vol. 44
116 pages. Price 10 Swiss Francs

It came as a surprise to me to learn that there was such an organization as the

International Union against Cancer, and to discover that this publication was No. 44 of a series. Writers from three countries, the United Kingdom, Australia and Italy, are represented in the monograph, and at first sight it does not seem to hold much of interest for general practitioners.

The publication was prompted by the feeling that the combined forces of voluntary cancer societies and the medical profession could be more effective in promoting public education about cancer, and chapter eight discusses the methodology of persuading doctors to take up the cudgels on behalf of societies to promote cancer education.

Other chapters describe educational objectives, which would interest course organisers or lecturers, and discuss the application of these principles to cancer education. Public attitudes to health education in general are discussed, and also sociological ideas and theory about communication. A chapter by Philip Ley consolidates the findings of a number of studies of communication and compliance and finally there is an account of an Italian experiment in Turin involving doctors in cancer education.

Sociology, educational theory, and research methods tend to breed jargon, but the monograph contains clear definitions, is economical in style, and yet manages to be interesting, readable, and illuminating.

L. A. PIKE

PRACTICAL PAEDIATRIC PROBLEMS

James H. Hutchison

Lloyd-Luke
London (1980

682 pages. Price £12

At the beginning of a decade when many general practitioners are questioning standards of child care and looking for ways of improving this in their own practices, the latest edition of *Practical Paediatric Problems* provides a clear, readable, and concise guide to clinical paediatrics which is up to date and full of common sense.

The chapters are short and are subdivided so that the reader can dip into them readily and find sensible advice about both the common problems and the rarer disorders of childhood, which present in general practice.

While giving remarkably up-to-date advice for a medical textbook on current therapeutics, Professor Hutchison also reminds the reader of time-honoured treatments which are no longer used. In chapter 20, on the subject of treatment of convulsions, he mentions, only to dismiss, the hot mustard bath. While recommending slow intravenous diazepam for status epilepticus he does not exclude the use of paraldehyde which in general practice can, on occasions, be of more practical value. In chapter one he states that Lobeline, nikethamide, and vanillic acid are contra-indicated in the management of asphyxia neonatorum, but spoils this by recommending the morphine antagonist nalorphine rather than naloxone, which is now the drug of choice.

The place of the general practitioner in child care is often mentioned, and in the chapter on respiratory diseases the author emphasizes that psychological management of chronic asthma "should be best carried out by the family doctor with his knowledge of the home background, its strengths, stresses and weaknesses." On psychoneurosis, chapter 27, he writes: "The majority of psychological problems in childhood can be resolved by the interested and sympathetic physician lacking specialized training in child psychiatry." The 20 lines on management of school phobia are admirably brief and sensible, and it is made clear that any but the milder forms constitute a psychiatric emergency, when specialist advice should be sought.

Under the sub-heading "Acute otitis media" oral amoxycillin is rightly recommended for pre-school children. It is unlikely however that many general practitioners will wish to give intramuscular benzyl penicillin every six hours to the older child, though this advice is presumably for hospital doctors.

Unfortunately, the author gives no simple rule of thumb to help mothers prepare suitable oral fluids for use in mild gastroenteritis. If this is to be remedied in future editions, it should be remembered that few mothers in Britain have gone metric in the kitchen.

The use of italics for emphasizing essential points is most helpful. In chapter 17, when discussing the importance of urine analysis in the investigation of ill children he writes: *"The diagnosis [of pyelonephritis] must be based upon examination of the urine including microscopy and culture,"* and he makes the same point in italics in chapter 27 when discussing enuresis.

In short, the book can be strongly recommended to established general practitioners as well as those in training.

CHRISTOPHER MAYCOCK

HOW MANY PATIENTS SHOULD A GP HAVE? A REVIEW OF POLICIES, CONCEPTS AND DATA

J. R. Butler

Centre for Research in the Social Sciences, University of Kent at Canterbury

Bedford Square Press, London (1980)

132 pages

In 1972 an editorial in this *Journal* asked "How many patients can a general practitioner look after?" and in doing so questioned the assumption that the (then) national average list size of 2,500 was right. In its report the Royal Commission on the National Health Service (1979) recommended that ". . . . before a maximum or minimum list size is adopted, considerable research . . . . should be undertaken"; it is in response to that statement that this report has been prepared.

Drawing extensively on published work, the first part of the report critically examines the varied opinions regarding optimum list size with particular reference to standards of care, the needs and demands of patients, the efficient organization of general practice, and the balance between the costs involved in reducing list sizes and the benefits that that reduction may bring. The author poses a number of questions relevant to forming a judgement about reasonable list size and the second part of the report surveys the relevant literature. This section is concerned with the effects of varying list sizes on time spent in patient care, consultation patterns, and the content and quality of care; it is concluded that there is no good evidence that large lists generate a poor standard of practice. In the concluding section the author emphasizes the pressing need to try to find better ways of measuring quality of care.

The author documents in detail the extensive literature on the number of patients whom a general practitioner ideally should have on his list. The report will be of interest chiefly to medical politicians and social scientists but the questions which it raises should be considered by everyone who is concerned about the future of general practice in this country.

D. G. GARVIE

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