

screening techniques cannot be assessed, and he outlines a population study which could provide the relevant information.

The book is well printed and presented and is a valuable contribution to our understanding of some of the problems besetting the National Health Service. It should certainly be read by all those concerned with the organization and development of the National Health Service, and could be read with profit and interest by every doctor.

A study of doctors. Mutual selection and the evaluation of results in a training programme for family doctors. MICHAEL BALINT, ENID BALINT, ROBERT GOSLING and PETER HILDEBRAND. London. Tavistock Publications Limited. 1966. Pp. xii + 146. Price 28s. 0d.

This book is about the Tavistock seminars. Their aim is to develop in general practitioners a sensitivity to their patients' emotional problems, to enable them to understand these problems more safely and at greater depth, and then to help them to acquire skills in using this understanding in treatment. It is of great interest to know whether the seminars succeed in these aims. Unfortunately their evaluation is a task of the greatest possible difficulty. This book takes certain limited steps in attempting it. No attempt is made to decide by before and after study of performance whether the seminars produce better general practitioners; this would be impossible at present, though it is desirable. The authors do examine success or failure of the applicants to the course by such measures as their length of stay in it and their ability to learn and modify their management of patients as judged by what they said and did in the seminar. In particular they examine the effect of introducing a selection procedure for applicants. The selection procedure in fact reduced the number of failures and saved hurt to the unsuccessful applicants as well as to the seminar leaders.

The study suggests that the seminars benefit doctors in their 30's and 40's more than older men or women. But perhaps the most striking finding is that 55 per cent of general practitioners are unlikely to be able to benefit at all from this type of training because they will find it ungenial. The remainder will be able to tolerate the experience, but only 20 per cent of the total will be able "to acquire a commendable amount of diagnostic and therapeutic skill". The rating-scale on which an estimate of success or failure is made is very elaborate. At this stage this is probably unavoidable but it does make this a complex book to read; it demands that the reader already has considerable interest. The authors bring great integrity to their judgment of their own work; their writing is for the most part very clear.

The Tavistock seminars have made a most important contribution to general practice, not only in this country. One of the interests of this book is a comparative evaluation of similar training schemes in other countries.