

to sustain through 24 consecutive hours the otherwise drooping animal energies.

This volume grapples most logically and clearly with the difficulties of language, which is inherent when two disciplines are brought together. For instance, depression to the psychiatrist is a definite clinical problem; the pharmacologist however, only understands it as lessening the function of any organ. It was found illuminating to read the consequential discussion of definition in the chapter on antidepressant drugs. The discussion of the monoamine oxidase inhibitors is balanced and sobering, particularly when the various antidepressants are evaluated within each group of drugs, such as the tricyclic antidepressants. The lack of successful and authoritative comparative clinical trials by which to justify the millions of tablets ingested annually is a terrifying thought, and either shows the tremendous success of their promotion by various makers or the emotional attitude of prescribers, still looking for the magic remedy. Naturally, ECT is also extensively discussed, as is drug addiction. Though in no position to criticize, I was sorry the authors did not see fit to refer to the basic work of Sir Jack Gaddum on lysergic acid in their so very erudite series of references.

As with most books in a field where the frontiers of knowledge are pushed back continuously, this one may well be out of date in some of its important discussions (for instance lithium therapy), yet its very objectives and wide discussion will make it a most worthwhile review book for some years to come of a tremendously vital subject.

Guide to steroid therapy. PICTON THOMAS, M.D., M.R.C.P. London. Lloyd-Luke (Medical Books) Ltd. 1968. Pp. viii+223. Price 37s. 6d.

Steroid therapy is now widely used in most departments of medicine, but its role in the suppression and modification of symptoms is still a matter for argument and conjecture.

Dr Picton Thomas's book falls into two parts. The first section is general, and deals with the chemistry and complications of steroid therapy, the effect on endogenous endocrine function, and tests of that function as a guide to the chemical results of therapy. The second section describes substitution therapy, treatment with androgens, oestrogens, progestins and aldosterone, and the use and abuse of corticosteroids in diseases of every system of the body. A valuable feature is its firm selection of those situations in which corticosteroid therapy is *not* likely to be of value, and its insistence on the suppressive function of these drugs. A patient first faced with the necessity for such treatment is likely to be alarmed if he is moderately well-informed, but later he and his doctor may be lulled into a sense of false security as symptoms disappear. It is important to remember that corticosteroids never cure, often cause toxic effects and may make some diseases worse. This book maintains a due sense of proportion, and is a useful guide for the general practitioner faced with the management of patients on long-term treatment. The references at the end of each chapter furnish the means of more detailed information for those who seek it.

Modern trends in pharmacology and therapeutics. Edited by W. F. M. FULTON, B.Sc., M.D., M.R.C.P. London. Butterworths. 1967. Pp. x+372. Price £4 5s.

A welcome development in the teaching of medicine has been the tendency towards integration of pure pharmacology with its clinical application, and an increasing establishment of university departments of pharmacology and thera-

peutics. In common with the other pure sciences on which medicine depends, pharmacology has advanced rapidly in the past decade to a point where drug action and interaction is understood in much more detail than ever before, so that the effects of new drugs may often be predicted with remarkable precision. This book, edited by a clinical pharmacologist, contains contributions by 17 prominent workers in this field on both sides of the Atlantic, and its intention is to bring to the notice of the physician those aspects of pharmacology which are directly relevant to therapeutics. It is aimed at the postgraduate student of internal medicine, but those general practitioners who wish to modernize their ideas on drug action and usage will find much to help them within its pages.

Following an initial chapter which presents with clarity and brevity a summary of modern concepts in basic pharmacology, there are articles on diuretics, oxygen therapy, cardiac drugs, antimicrobial drugs, hyperlipidaemia, the regulation of the blood pressure and the chemotherapy of malignant disease, to quote only a selection. Each subject is treated from a practical point of view, but attempts to show how newly-established scientific concepts should govern the intelligent use of therapeutic agents. Although some general practitioners will doubtless find the language of modern pharmacology an obstruction to their free enjoyment of this book, the seeker after knowledge will find much to reward him.

Problems and progress in medical care. Edited by GORDON McLACHLAN, *C.B.E.* London. New York. Toronto. Published by the Oxford University Press for The Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust. 1968. Pp. ix+170. Price 25s. 0d.

The third in the series, this collection of seven essays deals with (i) birth weight and perinatal mortality, (ii) medical manpower, (iii) manpower planning in the National Health Service, (iv) staffing maternity services, (v) child guidance, (vi) hospital communication, and (vii) the applications of computers to medicine.

Most of us have wished, at one time or another, that all junior hospital doctors were British, without wondering what would happen if our own medical schools turned out the 4,000 doctors per annum needed to fill these posts, leaving the present establishment of consultants and general practitioners unchanged. In fact it would be *essential* for 2,000 doctors to emigrate each year; this country would have no place for them apart from a few years service as junior hospital doctors.

This is one of the many facts highlighted by the authors of these informative and thought-provoking essays. The chosen subjects are complex, needing so much thought and investigation for full understanding that biased opinions can be formed all too easily. Realities must be recognized if the right decisions regarding the future of medical care are to be made. The essays, most of them by non-medical authors, deal with issues of importance in future planning and will give the medical reader new insight into problems which should be very much his concern.

Computers in the service of medicine. Essays on current research and applications. Volumes 1 and 2. Edited by G. McLACHLAN and R. A. SHEGOG. London, New York, Toronto. Published for the Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust by the Oxford University Press. 1968. Pp. vol. 1, x + 188, vol. 2, vi + 194. Price 25s. 0d. each.

These two volumes bring together the first reports from study groups, supported by the Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust, whose ultimate aim is the classification of the value of computers in medicine. The use of computers in epidemiological