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Psychiatric course

Sir,

Psychiatric courses convened by the Oxford Institute of Psychiatry still enjoy subsistence

allowances and postgraduate training allowances for general practitioners on the basis that general practitioners wishing to take advantage of these facilities must first have approval of the local director or dean of postgraduate studies in Oxford.

I would like to thank all members of the College who in any way have helped to maintain these facilities for general practitioners.

The new address of the Oxford Institute of Psychiatry and Postgraduate Fellowship of Psychiatry is 5 Walton Street, Oxford, and courses are still convened by Dr R. R. Tilleard-Cole.

Norwich.

R. INNES MUIR.

Book reviews

Planning local authority services for the elderly.
G. SUMNER AND R. SMITH. London. George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1969. Pp. 406. Price £4.

This book is timely in its appearance as there is now increasing concern about the medical and social needs of the elderly and to what extent these needs are known or unknown, met or unmet. Accordingly, any person who is to be involved in the future planning for the care of the elderly in the local authority field, will find this volume a mine of information. The work is based on a survey project, carried out from the Department of Social and Economic Research in the University of Glasgow.

The authors selected a number of health and welfare authorities in England and Wales, and in Scotland, and examined in these areas the level of provision of local authority services at the end of 1965 in respect of residential accommodation, housing and domiciliary services. Part I of the book reports the result of these surveys. Parts II and III are based mainly on discussion with officials in these selected local authorities, part II being concerned with how the level of need can be estimated. Part III deals with the problems caused for planning by the limited availability of resources.

The reader will remark how variable is the extent to which the different local authorities allocate resources for the elderly, how often such resources appear insufficient to meet the known need, and how little is known or attempted to be known by these authorities to discover what the future requirements of this section of the population is. For example, housing needs are based on waiting lists, which the local authorities are the first to admit are misleading and inaccurate. It was interesting to have the impression confirmed in this

factual report, that the use of health visitors in the care of the elderly is under-utilized.

The comprehensive report discussed in this book is designed primarily for the local authority official who is involved in the health and welfare services and it will be of lesser interest to general practitioners. However, the latter may find it of value and interest by reading the useful summaries at the end of each chapter and by consulting part IV of the book in which the authors put forward their conclusions and recommendations for the future. In this latter respect it is of especial interest that one of their recommendations is a plea for the Royal College of General Practitioners to form a group of general practitioners, geriatricians, and experts in record systems, to create a system for linking data based on a medical assessment with the data of social needs. This is something that general practitioners have been doing, in a way unconsciously, for years, without always recording the information. There is no doubt that regularizing this information by an accepted universal recording method would yield a wealth of basic information which would be invaluable to the local authority in their forward planning. It is hoped that those concerned with planning local authority services for the elderly in the future will follow-up the stimulus from this book in supporting and carrying out more of the surveys which are necessary.

The mechanism and management of headache.
JAMES W. LANCE, M.D., M.R.C.P., F.R.A.C.P.
London. Butterworths. 1969. Pp. xii+167. Price £2 5s. 0d. (£2.25).

The family doctor deals with symptoms; they may be trivial or severe, they may be signposts to grave organic disease or the manifestations of