

or with a high domiciliary delivery rate as in Holland or East Anglia.

Evidence from Newcastle upon Tyne shows that early discharge from maternity hospitals is readily accepted by everyone except district midwives who have to take over patients whose deliveries they have not attended. On the other hand, district midwives approved arrangements at a delivery suite from which patients were sent home soon after delivery. If early discharge is to continue, as surely it will, the difficulty of providing continuity of care can be overcome by providing hospitals or delivery suites in which district midwives and general practitioners are responsible for the deliveries.

The rôle of the general practitioner in the maternity services, however, will be diminished if the ideas of Professor Alwyn Smith prevail. He sees, in the future, yet another specialty, designed to supervise the period from shortly before conception to the end of early childhood, including family planning and contraception, the latter to be part of a programme devoted to the health of children rather than a convenience for parents. Perhaps the Professor's vision of the future will prove as unrealistic as his assessment of the present. Unless the fertilized ovum is considered to be a human individual, it is certainly not true that in this country nearly one fifth of all human individuals die before the end of their first year of postnatal life. Nor would he find it easy to substantiate his statement that the considerable variation in perinatal mortality in Britain must be mainly due to variations in the quality of medical care given to foetuses.

These essays are provocative and provide much food for thought. They are informative, if the wheat is separated from the chaff, not only of the facts of the maternity world but also of the climate of opinion therein, in which the general-practitioner obstetrician must work. If he wishes to survive, it will be to his advantage to be well aware of it.

The doctor and the law. J. LEAHY TAYLOR, M.B., B.S., D.M.J., M.R.C.G.P. London. Pitman Medical & Scientific Publishing Co. Ltd. 1970. Pp. 176. Price £2 0s. 0d.

Several years ago the Medical Defence Union published a 50-page booklet on the 'Law and the doctor' which had been specially written for the Union by Dr Douglas Robb the senior assistant medical secretary. This booklet, designed to inform the young graduate of the legal responsibilities that he will have as a doctor, is distributed free to all graduands. Now the other protection society has published a book written by its deputy secretary covering much the same ground. It is priced at £2 0s. 0d., but there is also a paperback edition.

The need for publications of this kind needs no stressing. Dr Taylor, by drawing on the archives of his society, shows only too plainly how easy it is

for any practising doctor to get himself into trouble. Age may bring experience to some, but a good grounding when young is the best insurance that there is, and it is lamentable that the subject of forensic medicine is not now so fully taught in the schools as it used to be.

Dr Taylor takes the reader through the problems of registration, enlightens him on his obligations as an employee and as an employer; warns him on his dealings with the police, and on the ways of solicitors about whom he is not quite so kind; criminal law and civil law as they affect the doctor are well-illustrated with 'true stories', and the awesome procedures of the courts are described in a way intended to take the sting out of them. The composition of the General Medical Council and its functions are well described. Stress is laid on good ethical behaviour.

This useful book is strongly recommended to the young practitioner; study of it may prevent many of those unfortunate occurrences which happen through thoughtlessness or ignorance. But when in trouble it is not enough to seek the solution in a book. The best prevention is for the doctor to get in touch at once with the defence union to which he belongs before his difficulties begin to loom large.

New edition

Progressive exercise therapy in rehabilitation and physical education. Second edition. JOHN H. C. COLSON, F.C.S.P., F.S.R.G., M.A.O.T. Bristol. John Wright & Sons Ltd. 1969. Pp. 207 and xii. Price £1 10s. (£1.50p).

In this book the author gives a comprehensive description of progressive physical exercises for all parts of the body. In addition several chapters are devoted to the application of these exercises in particular conditions such as convalescence after appendicectomy, hernial repair and intervertebral disc lesions.

Those who are not familiar with the Swedish educational gymnastics terminology will not find the exercise descriptions easy reading—"Half low yard grasp high half standing", "Wing thigh support side toward standing"—but numerous helpful diagrams make the meanings clear.

The sections on specific conditions seem to have been rather arbitrarily chosen, and although detailed breathing exercises are described, there is nothing in the text to indicate their application to particular diseases of the respiratory system.

It is doubtful if the doctor, or indeed the patient, who is not highly motivated will derive full benefit from this work as he will lack the patience to describe and perform respectively the various suggested exercises—unless of course the practitioner is fortunate enough to have direct access to a cooperative physiotherapy department.

These criticisms are made from the point of view of the general practitioner, for whom in all fairness this book is not primarily intended.