

six plus together barely exceed ten per cent of the whole.

So far as the 'dramatic' fall in the numbers of single-handed is concerned, this statement is only justifiable by using a date 20 years earlier as a baseline. This seems a little odd when the remainder of the report is, rightly, concerned with changes in the 1960s. As can be seen from the diagram, in that decade the number of 'loners' has steadily fallen from about 300 out of every 1,000 to about 240—still a sizeable section. It is perhaps significant to note that of these doctors the large majority are not in geographical isolation; their single-handedness is of choice, not of necessity.

My second brief criticism relates to a short paragraph in chapter 3 (Patterns of work). In two sentences reference is made to the institution of remuneration for visits between midnight and 7 am; it is reported that claims for such visits in 1968 totalled 202,000, or ten per doctor

per annum. In my not infrequent contacts with general practitioners of all types, I do not think I have found one who would accept this bald statement as a fair summary of 'the present state of general practice'. Because of the conditions attached to claiming such a night visit fee, which include a signature by the patient (or relative) the avowed purpose of which is to verify that the doctor is not seeking to cheat the government, many principals find the claiming process extremely distasteful. Some indeed have publicly stated that they do not claim at all.

For this reason, I believe that the paragraph is misleading, and that it should properly have had at least one more short sentence explaining that whilst no other comprehensive figures were available, the claim figures must be regarded as an understatement of the position.

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Book reviews

Social aspects of clinical medicine. JESSIE GARRAD AND LORD ROSENHEIM. London. Baillière, Tindall & Cassell. 1970. Pp. 174. Price £1 8s. (£1.40p).

Medical educators, increasingly concerned about the unbalanced nature of the undergraduate curriculum, have voiced the need for a shift in emphasis away from disease- to people-orientated medicine. There are several ways in which this may be achieved, and for many years the Medical Unit at University College Hospital, London has held "Social Medicine Conferences" for this purpose. This book springs from such roots, and compresses into 174 pages a vast wealth of experience, arranged into four sections. In the first, the basic skills in taking a social history are detailed. The second section illustrates the close inter-relationship existing between medical and social factors. The third section contains a brief description of rôles and functions of all concerned with health and welfare with an historical account of how the main services developed. The fourth is a reference section imaginatively classified by functional needs of a patient rather than by the more familiar list of organizations offering services. The book is rounded off by a full bibliography and appropriate index.

This experienced and professional attempt to fill a gap is likely to achieve its aims despite the limitations of a hospital-based approach, (it isn't only *outpatients* who are required to make a standard contribution towards the cost of prescriptions). Thus, the point of departure for most of the clinical examples is admission to hospital. Such

an approach emphasizes unduly the medical social worker's rôle in dealing with established medical and social pathology, which indeed occupies much of present-day hospital services, but it fails to demonstrate clearly enough opportunities afforded by daily work in the community for prevention of illness. In this sense the work falls short of its full potential in achieving the shift of emphasis so necessary in the medical curriculum. To the provincial reader the gulf fixed between hospital and general-practitioner services seems to be made wider than perhaps it is.

Further editions, for such there must be, might see corrections of the misprint on page 89 under "Industrial Health Service", and the odd emphasis of the functions of the MOH.

This book is a 'must' for senior medical students, and also for the young entrant to general practice.

Today's drugs. Commissioned articles from the British Medical Journal. London. British Medical Association. 1970. Pp. 213. Price £1.00.

This is a most useful book for the general practitioner and represents a collection of 60 articles from the New Series—published under this title in the *British Medical Journal*. As mentioned in the preface, textbooks on therapeutics tend to become obsolescent even soon after publication and therefore this book represents only a number of subjects presented and brought up-to-date since they appeared in the *Journal*. Further volumes