

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.

Stevenage.

DAVID GULLICK.

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

will be published at yearly intervals, until most of the field of therapeutics is covered.

The contents of this first volume deal with the anti-infective agents, vitamins, drugs acting on the blood, and psychotropic agents, and in discussing these subjects the sections are devoted not only to the drug groups but also to their use in the management of different clinical conditions.

Although the articles have been written by different authors, the standard throughout is consistently high so that this paperback is a useful book for reading, for keeping up-to-date, and for reference. Being a paperback it is reasonably priced.

Diseases of the colon, rectum and anus. Tutorials in postgraduate medicine. Edited by BASIL C. MORSON, D.M., F.C.Path. London. William Heinemann Medical Books Ltd. 1969. Pp. xiii+314. Price £2 10s. (£2.50).

This volume, which is the first of a projected series, is really a collection of lectures on diseases of the large bowel and anus, directed mainly at the young trainee surgeon and general practitioner. There are twenty-six chapters, starting with the anatomy, physiology, radiology and instrumentation of the region. These are followed by accounts of each group of ailments and include valuable chapters on colostomy and ileostomy, as well as the expected chapters on polyposis, cancer, proctocolitis, Crohn's disease, ischaemic disease of the large bowel, haemorrhoids and fistula. Each chapter is clearly laid out, important points tabulated and simple line diagrams are well used. There is a short but adequate bibliography at the end of each chapter.

The contributors are all well-known and mainly based at St Mark's Hospital, London. Each has made a clear and precise contribution and the whole has been well put together by the editor.

The general practitioner will find this book a most useful source of information about these extremely common and often inadequately treated conditions. It is excellent value at the reasonable price of 50s., and should be on every doctor's shelf.

It is hoped that the further tutorials projected in this series will keep up the high standard set by the first.

Road accidents and the family doctor. London. British Medical Association. 1970. Pp. 56. Price 10s. (50p).

This booklet is a collation of a series of articles that were published in the *British Medical Journal* last autumn. At the time the reviewer was impressed with the clarity and practicality as being relevant to the needs of any doctor called to a road traffic accident. It is good, therefore, that they are now published as a booklet which is excellent value for ten shillings.

For too long, medical students have not been

taught the essential principles of first aid with, sometimes, unfortunate and embarrassing results for them when they are faced with a serious accident. This may well explain why, in some areas the police and fire services prefer to keep meddlesome professional men out of the way. They have a point. Therefore, any effort to publicize and encourage the development of schemes such as the North Riding Road Accident After Care scheme in other areas is to be welcomed and this booklet does just this. It is fascinating to read, with a wealth of information and leaves one with a desire to learn more about the use of the sophisticated equipment and practical techniques necessary if one is to provide skilled professional care to the severely injured. The articles by Drs Snook and Easton are particularly good in this respect. It perhaps underlines a need for a comprehensive manual on the management of road traffic accidents that will be of use not only to doctors but to all others concerned like the police, fire services and ambulance crews. But accident management is only one side of the coin, the other side is accident prevention and it is timely that Mr Norman Capener should have written the introduction in which he has outlined the valuable contribution of the Medical Commission on Accident Prevention. This is purely a medical body dedicated to the study of what is one of the most serious epidemics of this century and the greatest killer of our young people.

Church and hospital. MARGARET WELCH. London. Falcon Books. 1970. Pp. 59. Price 5s. (25p.)

This short booklet fills a gap in available information for voluntary workers in hospitals. Its title indicates that much of the work discussed is to supply the spiritual wants and needs of patients. The information and advice contained however, can be applied to all forms of visiting and practical volunteer service in wards and outpatient departments.

The explanation about structure and conventions of the professional hospital staffing and methods, will help to avoid misunderstandings and wasted good intentions of the newcomer.

An oversight is the lack of reference to the part that junior medical staff play in their contacts with the patients and awareness of their needs. The shifts of nursing staff and the intermittent visits of consultants may not know all of these, though co-operation with them is essential. Young doctors can be very grateful for the help afforded by experienced volunteers, welfare workers and chaplains.

The style of writing is direct and the reading list admirable.

Coronary care. NORMAN L. GOODLAND, S.R.N., R.N.M.S. Bristol. John Wright & Sons Ltd. 1970. Pp. viii+88. Price 18s. (90p).

This small book is written primarily for the nursing staffs of coronary care units, with a