

Book reviews

Fatal civil aircraft accidents. P. J. STEVENS.
Bristol. Wright. 1970. Pp. xii+206.
Price £6.00.

The increasing number of aircraft accidents has led to the development of aviation medicine and pathology. Fortunately this branch of medicine is in its adolescence because the number of air-crashes relative to miles travelled is small. Wing Commander Stevens discusses 74 fatal accidents in which he, or his colleagues at Halton, took part in the investigation. The book is based on an MD thesis, there are four sections: public transport, light aircraft, gliders and the mass disaster. Discussion of clues which may indicate the cause and hence prevention of accidents is a prominent theme. The importance of post-mortem examination in every case is stressed; it is interesting to note that in the fifties this was frequently omitted in the presence of multiple injuries.

Wing Commander Stevens goes into detail on pilot failure due to illness; coronary artery disease is rare as a cause with the professional pilot but more frequent in the private flyer. When alcohol or drugs have been involved it is usually in the private sector. A gliding instructor who successfully concealed his epilepsy and finally crashed is a disturbing example.

The book should be easily understood by the average doctor. It opens a window on a field which is likely to become increasingly important. A general practitioner near an airport or in a mountainous area may find himself confronted with the results of an air-crash. This book would give him an idea on procedure while awaiting the arrival of the expert investigation team. He would also realize the importance of minor deviations from the physical or emotional normal when examining those who intend to pilot aircraft.

A small criticism is the numbering of accidents, apparently with reference to a register at the RAF Institute of Pathology, Halton. I found this confusing and the numbers have no meaning for the reader. Perhaps they will be omitted from a second edition. This book is strongly recommended as an introduction to aviation medicine and pathology. It is well-produced with many illustrations.

Browne's Antenatal Care. J. C. MCCLURE BROWNE
F.R.C.S., F.R.C.O.G., and G. DIXON Ph.D.,
F.R.C.P.(EDIN.), F.R.C.O.G. J. and A. Church-
ill, London. 1970. Pp. vii + 350. £3.00.

This is the tenth edition of the time-honoured textbook of antenatal care by the late Professor F. J. Browne of whom it contains an excellent portrait. First published in 1935, it has been translated into many languages such as Chinese,

Spanish and Turkish. Professor J. C. McClure Browne joined his father in compiling the ninth edition and has now taken over, with the assistance of Geoffrey Dixon, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of Bristol University. Three specialist contributors, Dr Erica Wachtel, Dr J. L. Fluker and Professor John Davis have written sections on vaginal cytology, venereal diseases and the infant born to the diabetic mother respectively, and last being a matter of only half a page. The section on postnatal care has been omitted from this edition but some sections, for instance those on the rhesus factor, diabetes and heart disease, include notes on the management of these conditions in labour and the puerperium.

The general-practitioner obstetrician must not be deterred by the final paragraphs of chapter 1. He must not feel either that general-practice obstetrics is so unexciting that it is not worth practising or that authors who can so underestimate his training and ability are not worth reading. Most of the views expressed on case selection are borrowed from official publications of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to which the authors may have felt obliged to give their support. Ex cathedra statements are not necessarily incontrovertible. The general practitioner may well be right if he considers that he *is* capable of taking responsibility for *some* patients with previous histories of obstetric abnormality or medical disorder; that some with abnormalities and some primigravidae are not beyond his competence; that each patient should be assessed individually rather than in accordance with the statistics of one of the groups into which she can be fitted.

For this edition the text has been completely rewritten and most figures are in the metric system. Maternal weights are given in both metric and avoirdupois but infant weights are only in metric. Doctors will already be familiar with these in grams but they still need to be converted to pounds for mother's benefit. In the appendices there is a useful reducing diet for expectant mothers. A list of references is given at the end of each chapter and there is an adequate index. The text is not without errors of fact (its definition of perinatal mortality) and outmoded opinion (disinfestation of bedding in scabies), but it is, as previous editions have been, a sound and comprehensive guide to antenatal care with which all general practitioners should be familiar.

The registry in cancer control. UICC Technical Report Series, Vol. 5. EDITED BY J. KNOWLEDEN, T. MORK AND A. J. PHILLIPS. Geneva.

International Union Against Cancer. 1970. 42 pages. 60p.

This booklet is based upon papers read at a conference organized by the Committee on Detection and Registries of the Commission on Cancer Control of the International Union Against Cancer. However, the authors have concentrated on a critical review of the purpose and scope of such registries. Their conclusions can with profit be studied by anyone interested in setting up any disease index or registry for they have relevance outside the restricted field of cancer morbidity.

Although "the organization of a cancer registry gives an opportunity for recording variables which are not usually obtainable with routine systems of health statistics", and "a cancer registry allows greater scope for aetiological enquiry", the authors elsewhere point out that "many aetiological studies have not depended on registries", that "the registry is no substitute for a properly designed therapeutic trial", and that the information so gained may be available from other existing health statistics if they are processed appropriately. They also make the point that "if it is conceded that in these circumstances there is a case for establishing a registry, careful consideration should be given to the possibility of serving its purposes by a study of limited duration". They end by making the interesting suggestion that "it would seem a pity if the opportunity were not taken of seeing how far the cancer registry could be extended to provide information on other important diseases, and how far its organization could be integrated with that of other health statistics to provide an integrated information service".

In a modest way the College is approaching this ideal via the gradual extension of the use of Disease Indexes in general practice and by participation in the National Morbidity Survey.

The alcoholic and the help he needs—Part I.

First edition. M. GLATT, M.D., M.R.C.P., D.P.M. Royston, Hertfordshire. Priory Press Ltd. 1970. Pp xi + 114. Price 50p

This is Part I of a two volume work in which the first is designed to provide a basic understanding of the problem of alcoholism to both lay and professional readers whereas Part II gives more detailed coverage including treatment and is therefore more suited to the latter group. The appearance of the book is both timely and welcome as there is an increasing interest and awareness of the problems and misery caused by this widespread disease, on the part of the government bodies, the medical profession, and the ancillary helping organizations.

As might be expected when it is from the pen of such a well-known expert, the book is authoritative and easy to read. The author defines the different types of alcoholism, and in classifying such, refers to the confusion of terminology in respect of the different degrees of the disease.

His book is concerned with what he calls the 'gamma alcoholism' and the 'delta alcoholism' of Jellinek which he says are addictions in the pharmacological sense and could be considered to be diseases. To the lay reader such differentiation may cause confusion. Facts and figures are given about the incidence and prevalence of the disease and the author admits that much of this information is based on insufficient evidence for which there is need for more accurate data. The author feels that the general practitioner is often unaware of the early signs and symptoms of the condition and of the extent of the disease in the community. Perhaps he is not even sympathetic to the problem when it is recognized in the individual.

The reviewer felt that in this part of the book a definite omission by the author was to stress insufficiently the difficulty of getting the alcoholic to recognize that he suffers from the condition and is in need of help. Many general practitioners are aware of alcoholism in their patients from the evidence presented by spouse or other member of the family, or from the pattern of sick absence from work. Nevertheless they find it difficult to establish contact with the sufferer or to get him to follow the advice which has been given. Perhaps Dr Glatt will discuss this problem in Part II of his book.

The chapters are logically set out and the effects of alcoholism in the different age groups, within the family, at work, on suicide and crime, and on the road accident rate, are all discussed. Part I concludes with two appendices containing useful addresses of helping organizations including a list of the still far too few hospital alcoholic units. There are suggestions of suitable books for further reading. Having enjoyed reading Part I and having learnt considerably from it, the reviewer looks forward to study Part II.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Registered as disabled. Occasional papers on social administration No. 35. SALLY SAINSBURY. London. G. Bell & Sons. 1970. Pp. 205. Price 44s. (£2.20).

Young children in hospital. Second edition. JAMES ROBERTSON. London. Tavistock Publications. 1970. Pp. 155. Price 16s. (80p).

The demand for hospital care. I. S. L. LOUDON, B.M., B.Ch.D. (Obst.) R.C.O.G., M.R.C.G.P., Oxford. United Oxford Hospitals. 1970. Pp. 94. Price £2.20

Diseases of the joints. London. British Medical Association. Pp. 107. Price 15s. (75p).

Attachment of nursing services in general practice. Report of the joint working party on group attachment. Hemel Hempstead Educare. 1970. Pp. 3+19. Price 3s. (15p).