

women than men and this correlates with thinning, reduced elasticity and excessive mobility of deeper structures. Senile purpura tends to occur in areas of severe degeneration where excessive mobility tends to rupture blood vessel entry. The delay in reabsorption of senile purpura is due to the absence of normal phagocytic response to extravasated blood (Shuster and Scarborough)⁵.

I have recently completed a years double-blind study of vitamin supplements in 80 elderly patients. Vitamin supplements did not significantly affect the abnormal tongue appearances, or the signs of angular stomatitis or geographical tongue. The incidence of senile purpura and capillary fragility were likewise unaltered. It would appear that there is as yet, inconclusive evidence that abnormal appearances in the elderly are invariably due to vitamin deficiency.

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2. Andrews, J., Letcher, M. and Brook, M. (1969) *British Medical Journal*, 2 416.
3. Arthur, G., Monro, J. A., Poore, P., Rilwan, W. B. and Murphy, E. C. (1967) *British Medical Journal*, 1 732-33.
4. Shuster, S., and Bottoms, Eva, (1963) *Clinical Science* 25 487.
5. Shuster, S. and Scarborough H, (1961) *Quarterly Journal of Medicine*, 30 33.

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A treatment for tremor

Sir,

It has been noticed by several workers that B receptor blocking drugs have some effect in controlling tremor. The writer of this note has tried propranolol (Inderal) in a small number of cases and has found it only slightly effective in Parkinsonism, but much more effective in senile and familial tremor, tremors for which no specific pathology can be found and which have none of the other characteristics of Parkinsonism.

It is intended to carry out a trial of propranolol in the treatment of familial and senile tremor in about 100 to 150 patients, with 20 to 25 doctors taking part.

The method of assessment of improvement or otherwise following a planned course of treatment would be by the examination of the handwriting of the patients by a handwriting expert, using a scoring method to measure degrees of improvement.

If any doctor is interested in taking part in this trial would he or she kindly contact the undersigned.

63 Court Road,
Eltham,
London, S.E.9.

Dr Ivor Sevitt,

Book reviews

The practice of family medicine. First edition. Edited by DAVID F. COULTER, M.D., F.R.C.G.P. and DAVID J. LLEWELLYN, L.R.C.P., M.R.C.S., M.R.C.G.P., D.I.H., D.M.J. London. E. & S. Livingstone. 1971. Pp. iv + 415. Price £3.50.

This is one of the most important books on general practice to have been published in the last year or two. It is not just a new book but a new type of book. It is the first major attempt to provide a comprehensive text for vocational trainees and other young graduates choosing general practice as their career. Its greatest achievement is that it is remarkably comprehensive, readable, essentially practical and reasonably compact.

The method employed has been to invite 22 contributors to provide a section each. All but one are fellows or members of the Royal College of General Practitioners. Whilst this facilitates breadth of approach it inevitably leads to some difference in emphasis on similar problems in

different sections. It is unfortunate that the names of the contributors are not given with their chapters particularly as several of them use the personal pronoun frequently.

Some statements are too dogmatic such as "the patient's record card . . . must not be removed from the surgery" as many practitioners prefer to have their records with them on home visits. Nor will the phrase in the section in the management of asthma "antibiotics are essential" (p. 186) command general acceptance. It is a pity that no treatment at all is suggested in the section on nocturnal enuresis (p. 189) and an interesting approach to this problem described in a later chapter on psychoneurosis (p. 265) is not indexed.

Nevertheless such minor blemishes do not seriously mar a major contribution to the literature of general practice. It is a pleasure to see such emphasis on the psychosocial aspects of modern practice. A whole chapter on family planning is certainly both desirable and necessary (although

the reference to Chlormadinone is now out of date as it has been withdrawn).

Alcoholism is a notable and unfortunate omission in the book but most of the other social disorders are well covered.

It is to be hoped that this book will be found in all the teaching practices as these develop and it may well be used in addition as a useful revision course for principals in active practice.

Parents and family planning services. First edition by ANN CARTWRIGHT. London. Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1970. Pages xvi + 293. Price £3.00.

This book sets down the contraceptive habits of the parents of a carefully randomized sample of newly-born children in 1968. The exhaustive analyses are statistically impeccable, but the writing is remarkably dull.

Two findings are of particular note here. Although general practitioners are now consulted on contraception more than any other professional agency, too few are adequately trained to meet the demand. Women who have a medical examination when first prescribed the Pill are significantly less likely to develop troublesome side effects.

Dedicated demographers will buy this book. Others may need persuading.

Infant feeding and feeding difficulties. Fourth edition. RONALD MCKEITH, D.M., F.R.C.P. and CHRISTOPHER WOOD, M.B., M.R.C.P., D.C.H. London. J. & A. Churchill. 1971. Pp. 1 + 268. Price £2.25.

In the preface of the first edition of this manual, the authors said: "Infant feeding has changed greatly in recent years . . . There have been advances in simplicity to lighten the mother's lot". This statement is even more true of the changes that have taken place in the simplification of infant feeding techniques in the 20 years since that statement was made.

The authors have attempted to bring the book up to date. Unfortunately the planning of the chapters makes this a difficult, if not impossible, task. Publishers please note: few textbooks are as good after the second edition as they were when completely fresh. These days they have to compete with journals full of review articles providing the doctor with a refresher course in monthly capsules.

It is difficult to fault this book on facts. The style is generally quite good; the authors sought the assistance of a professional editor. Unfortunately this did not prevent the inclusion of the same point, about mothers not attending welfare clinics, twice within the first eight pages. Presumably it was a desire to economize by using existing plates which lead to the reference to British

age and weight charts (page 8) being accompanied by a picture of American charts.

The scope of the manual goes well beyond ordinary infant feeding. Subjects covered include the infant; food requirements; advantages and disadvantages of breast and bottle feeding, and the preparation for and the techniques of both methods. Also covered are descriptions of various gastro-intestinal disorders in infancy and the feeding requirements in those illnesses. Twelve appendices (between them occupying 36 of the book's 260 pages of text) cover most of the factual background, including a description of most of the milks available for infant feeding.

There are a number of illustrations, most of them borrowed from earlier editions—if I judge the photographic and drawing styles correctly.

Which general practitioners might want to pay £2.25 for this manual? This is a difficult question to answer. Those who had a good paediatric training and keep abreast of modern trends will know most of the relevant points in this book and will have little need for the rest of it. From the sort of questions the reviewer (allegedly knowing a little about infant feeding) is asked by other general practitioners those who want to *learn* about this subject will have to look elsewhere.

Publishers say general practitioners do not buy textbooks. Why should they buy textbooks that are irrelevant to their needs? What is needed are more textbooks written for general practitioners by general practitioners.

Manual of family planning and contraceptive practice. Second edition. Edited by MARY STEICHEN CALDERONE, M.D., M.P.H. Baltimore. The Williams & Wilkins Co. Edinburgh & London. E. & S. Livingstone. 1970. Pp. 475. Price £7.00.

This is an excellent textbook covering all aspects of family planning in considerable detail. It is a tribute to the high standards of the 60 authors that such a wide field could be embraced between such relatively slim covers. Originating in the USA the legal and administrative aspects naturally reflect the transatlantic scene, but nevertheless make interesting reading. There is a masterly chapter on oral contraceptives by the pioneer Celso-Ramon Garcia. The sections on teaching are models of their kind and worthy of study by any medical educationalist. Only the chapter on diaphragms disappoints. It seems strangely old-fashioned, particularly the illustrations which are poor. It was only on the second time round that the reviewer noted that the author died in 1950.

Here is a book that should be on the shelves of every group practice and health centre. There is no other which is quite so complete and authoritative.