

Book reviews

The Treatment of the Child at Home – A guide for Family Doctors. 1971. First Edition. R.S. ILLINGWORTH, M.D., F.R.C.P., D.P.H., D.H.C. Pp. 301 + xv. Oxford and Edinburgh: Blackwell Scientific Publications. Price £2.75.

Professor Illingworth has written this book, as he says because there is no book for the family doctor about the treatment of the child in the home. The question of what should, and should not, be treated in the home is, he admits, a matter of opinion: the reader is never left in any doubt about the author's views on when specialist consultation or hospital treatment are advisable. He makes it clear, too, when these firm opinions are based on 'independent' evidence if there is any, and when they are based on his clinical experience and judgment.

The first 74 pages are devoted to 'general comments on treatment': these principles of treatment cover a very broad range, and include diet, rest, exercise, the proper use of drugs, and behaviour problems. Some very trenchant comments are made on the abuse of drugs and common mistakes in treatment.

The next 200 pages or so are devoted to "the treatment of individual symptoms and diseases", listed alphabetically from abdominal pain, acne and adenoids via diarrhoea and dwarfism, growing pains and gynaecomastia, negativism and nephritis, sleep refusal and snakebite, to whooping cough, Wilm's tumour and worms. It is difficult to think of any worthwhile addition to the 223 diseases and symptoms which the author covers, sometimes in a few lines, sometimes at considerable length. (Asthma, coeliac disease and epilepsy not unexpectedly are the longest contributions.) Whether brief or not, Professor Illingworth is clear, definite and practical in his advice, and where he feels strongly, refreshingly dogmatic. Perhaps the commonest recurring theme is "drugs are no help" and "there is no place for medicine in treatment".

The final section consists of a few appendices, the longest on official and trade names of drugs, and a full index.

This is without doubt a valuable book which fills a gap in the family doctor's shelf. It could be regarded as a clinical equivalent to the laboratory workers' "bench book", and should therefore live in the consulting room, or at least in the group practice library. The nearest hospital or post-graduate library will not be near enough for easy and rapid reference—though it ought to be there too.

Intrauterine Devices. First Edition. 1971. CLIVE WOOD, M.Sc., D.Phil. London: Butterworth & Co. (Publishers) Ltd. Pp. 151. Price: £1.00

This booklet presents what the author calls an

"overview" of the subject. Its main concern, understandably, is with intrauterine *contraceptive* devices, but in the historical introduction he explains that they have been used for other purposes.

It is intended for workers in family planning, whether medically qualified or not, and for the inquisitive layman. The text is clear and accurate, apart from an exaggerated view of the dangers of retroversion.

The book will give any interested practitioner a broader perspective of the subject, but it does not claim to give instructions on technique. At the price it can be considered a bargain offer.

An A.B.C. of endocrinology. (1971). CATT, K. J., M.D., Ph.D., F.R.A.C.P. Pp. 154. London: *The Lancet*. Price: £1.00.

An A.B.C. of endocrinology is published by *The Lancet* and is compiled from a series of articles by Dr J. K. Catt, which appeared in *The Lancet* recently. There are two additional chapters. The chapters deal with hormones in a general sense, hormones which are grouped together by a physiological process such as pregnancy or a hormone in isolation as illustrated of the growth hormone of the anterior pituitary gland. The pathology of the endocrine glands is described and explained.

The text is concise and factual as opposed to discursive. It is up to date in the best sense and the full list of references at the end of each chapter gives the reader ample opportunity to enlarge his studies on any particular subject. Considerable importance is laid on the fact that chemical assay is replacing bio-assay which deals with fractions of milligrammes which may defeat the imagination of some practising physicians. Such techniques are, nevertheless, more precise and convincing.

For the general practitioner it is a book to read from beginning to end, and not a reference book; for there is an interlocking between chapters due to the known interdependence of the endocrine glands and their respective hormones. It will enhance his insight by scientific knowledge of the symptoms which are presented to him by his patients to the benefit of the latter. He will understand and therefore be able to impart with effect the new procedures to which his patients are submitted by his consultant colleagues. The hormonal background to the treatment of infertility illustrates this aspect of the book's intrinsic value.

At present day values the price of one pound is ridiculously cheap.