

Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that one third of all a general practitioner's patients reach hospital each year by one route or another.

This report is at its best in documenting and bringing up to date the organisational changes in general practice itself. The introduction of appointment systems and the move towards group practice are well illustrated.

Small volumes of this kind inevitably face the dilemma of deciding on the one hand how far to go on bringing data up to date, and on the other hand, how much to reshape the presentation to introduce new ideas. All this information is competently presented in short, readable sections. The authors can be proud to have covered so much ground in so few pages.

However, it is noticeably stronger in the sections on "present state" than in the consideration of "future needs". There is no reference to the immense implications for general practice of the introduction of computers or even a discussion of the change in the size of the National Health Service medical records. The possibility of a different system of record keeping such as the problem-orientated record is not mentioned.

Somehow, at the end, I was left looking for more. This sense of expectation arose from the absence of comment on the content of the consultation in general practice today. The approach in this report is epidemiological and the emphasis is mechanistic rather than medical—organisational rather than clinical. The intellectual challenge of modern practice now lies more in the problems of caring for patients than in the methods of arranging that care. In prescribing, for example, this report considers only the cost aspect and makes no mention of many of the dramatic changes in general-practitioner activity—such as the prescribing of oral contraceptives for one in six of the whole British female population of childbearing age; the dilemma as whether to prescribe cholesterol-lowering agents; or the achievement of some practitioners of eliminating amphetamines entirely.

The figures on the number of health visitors now attached to practices do not reveal the changes in child care which are occurring such as practice children's clinics and more developmental surveillance.

There have also been some interesting developments in the further involvement of general practitioners in preventive medicine including the screening of postgastrectomy patients and the increase in cervical cytology tests. It is not stated that in the first half of 1971 the number of cervical smears taken in general practice exceeded for the first time the number taken by local-authority medical and nursing staff.

Certainly it is necessary for this edition to be read in conjunction with the College's other recent publication, *The Future General Practitioner—Learning and Teaching* to which it is complementary.

However, just as practice organisation is an essential prelude to good clinical care so perhaps

this excellent survey of organisational developments in practice may prove a prelude to future reports from the College on the present state and future needs of the *clinical* aspects of general practice.

D. J. PEREIRA GRAY

The preterm baby—and other babies with low birth weight. B. Mary Crosse. Pp. 290 + x. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone. Price: £3.00.

The seventh edition of a book which many physicians must have used during the past 25 years has now appeared. Its change of title (from *The Premature Baby*) epitomises the change of approach to the problems of light-weight babies which has occurred over the past decade or more—distinguishing those that are full-term ('light for dates') from those that are pre-term (less than 37 weeks gestation).

The size of the problem is evident from the figures of the 1958 Prenatal Mortality Survey, in which babies of less than 2,500 grams birthweight contributed seven per cent of all babies and carried a prenatal mortality rate of 267 per thousand live births (compared with 33 per thousand live births for birthweights of over 2,500 grams). Moreover in the years since 1958 the incidence of low-weight babies is known to have increased, and their still-birth rate to have declined considerably.

Since the majority (perhaps two in every three) of light weighters are pre-term babies, it is logical enough that the book starts by dealing with some of the physiological deficits they face—though some readers may wish that this basic physiological material had been more fully discussed.

Thereafter, the book is mainly concerned with the problems facing the light-weight baby during the period it is still in hospital and prior to its discharge home. General practitioners may, therefore, be inclined to set aside this book as of little immediate interest to them—particularly in an era when an increasing percentage of births occur in major maternity units. Nevertheless, there are two good reasons for the general practitioner being familiar with the problems of light-weight babies—firstly, the increased infant mortality to which they are prone, and the implications which light birthweight has for the child's development; and secondly, the mother's need for an opportunity to ventilate her anxieties and questions to her doctor, when the child returns home.

Areas of this book are not easy to read—partly because of the profusion of references (admirable in itself), and the author's habit of stringing extracts together. This at times produces more the semblance of a catalogue with which the reader must wrestle rather than any distillation of experience (the brief section on antenatal care, for example, reads like an inventory of technological armamentaria without any critical comment on its

selective use). But if the reader is prepared to wrestle with the text a wealth of material is available to him.

H. J. WRIGHT

The evaluation of a direct nursing attachment in a North Edinburgh practice. MACGREGOR, S. W., HEASMAN, M. A., and KUENSSBERG, E. V. (1971). Pp. 59. Edinburgh: Scottish Home and Health Department. Price: 68p.

This study describes the effects of attaching two Queen's Nurses to a large efficiently-run group practice of 21,000 NHS patients. The work of doctors and nurses was recorded and analysed for 28 days before and 28 days after the introduction of the nurses. The attitude of patients towards the use of a nurse was also examined.

The study is of interest because it analyses all the different activities carried out by the doctors and compares the frequency of each in the 'before and after' period.

The analysis gives a useful and detailed account of how an already efficient practice used two extra pairs of hands. The authors showed that the doctor-patient contacts were slightly reduced and that the doctors delegated certain procedures, i.e. repeat visits and consultations, to the nurses.

Time studies were not carried out but the report shows clearly those areas of medical activity on which the doctors concentrated when the nurses were available. These areas of increased medical activity included: history taking; and the use of diagnostic instruments (other than stethoscope).

Interestingly enough, the number of clinical examinations was not increased. Patients as well as the doctors clearly appreciated the attachment of the nurses. Understandably the study failed to demonstrate statistically any improvements in either the doctor's efficiency or the quality of medical care. These are undefinable variables which have so far defied attempts at evaluation. The study contains much useful information and will be helpful to anyone interested in nursing attachments.

KEITH HODGKIN

Postgraduate medicine. DAVIES, I. J. T., (1972).

Pp. 459. London: Lloyd-Luke. Price: £4.00. In this second edition of his book Dr Davies has remedied certain omissions which were apparent in the first edition. There has been extensive revision and re-writing. New material has been added to every chapter.

Neither a students' textbook nor a comprehensive work of reference, the author has bravely aspired to a compromise type of work "intended to be read from cover to cover". He deals with the basic requirements of current postgraduate medicine—and much more. Many matters ill-understood by embryonic physicians have been selected for concise and clear explanation. The writing is simple, terse and incisive with effective use of short sentences.

In general, Dr Davies controls the problems of

choice of subject material from the corpus of knowledge with elegant eclecticism. However, one questions the wisdom of having a chapter on dermatology, particularly when this is so inferior to the rest of the book. Haematology, presently restricted to three pages on anaemia, could with profit be substituted.

There are particularly useful chapters on the laboratory diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases, medical disorders in pregnancy and drug reactions and interactions.

Short biographical footnotes enhance the reader's interest.

The book has been produced with much care and there are no major errors, but it must be pointed out that the value of rectal examination is not confined to those with abdominal pain. The references are comprehensive and helpful and there is a useful index.

This is a notable work in a new dimension and the author may be said to have achieved his object. The lucid, direct approach will make the book of value to all doctors and senior students. However, none will have greater profit than the general practitioner ten years or more out of medical school. At £4 this is a good investment for all.

D. G. ILLINGWORTH

Nurses in an integrated health service—report of a working group appointed by the Scottish Home and Health Department (1972). Pp. 37.

Edinburgh: H.M.S.O. Price: 32p.

In September 1971 the Scottish Home and Health Department set up a Working Group consisting of 15 nurses under the Chairmanship of Dame Muriel Powell, Chief Nursing Officer for Scotland "to consider the organisation of the nursing work in the National Health Service in Scotland in the context of the proposed reorganisation of the administrative structure of the Service".

Although the report has been prepared primarily for Scottish interests, the proposals contained therein could form a basis for discussion throughout the whole country. The emphasis is on improved patient care and it is obvious that the members of the Working Group are optimistic that integration of the health service offers a real opportunity for such improvement.

The first chapter is concerned with the purpose of the nursing service. It is encouraging to note that much importance is given to the establishment of a good supportive relationship between nurse and patient. The report next traces the growth of the team concept of nursing care both in hospital and in the community. Proposals for an administrative structure for the nursing profession are considered in detail. It is suggested that experienced nurses with considerable clinical skills, particularly in specialities, should be able to continue to use these skills and at the same time act as advisers to the administration.

The Working Group sees considerable difficulties in nurses working both in hospital and in the community at the same time, but it suggests