

such as that illustrating the horizontal position, whereas that outlining the technique of drown-proofing is clear and useful. At the back of the book are lists of the muscles of the body, the nerves of the body, Latin medical words and other helpful pieces of information including some sample phrases in foreign languages.

The size is compact, the weight reasonable and the presentation good. The indented alphabetical index makes the book easy to use and the spelling is American. Although rather expensive Taber's remains one of the best medical dictionaries.

TEXTBOOKS OF MEDICINE

There are several textbooks of medicine used in general practice and rapid advances in the subject have often meant that general practitioners have tended to choose the book with the most recent edition in order to be as up to date as possible.

It is therefore particularly interesting that three of the most popular textbooks of medicine have appeared almost simultaneously, produced by three different publishers. This situation provides an opportunity to compare and contrast these most popular textbooks at a time when, for once, the date of publication is not an overriding factor.

A Short Textbook of Medicine. (1972). HOUSTON, J. C., JOINER, C. L. & TROUNCE, J. R. London: The English Universities Press Ltd. Pp. 590. Price: £1.75.

The previous edition of this book received a very favourable review in this *Journal* when it was suggested that it was then one of the best textbooks of medicine available in the United Kingdom.

It is still undoubtedly one of the leading contenders and probably the cheapest comprehensive book available. Its size is convenient and it is more easily carried about than any of its main rivals although part of the size has been achieved by using small print, particularly for the index.

One of the best features of this book is the fact that ten per cent of it is devoted to psychiatry, but rather rigid and dogmatic teaching is revealed in places. Personal doctors may wonder about "in this writer's view, termination of pregnancy on psychiatric grounds can only be justified when the continuation of the pregnancy would certainly carry a risk to the mother's life, or permanent destruction of her health. It can never be justified on purely sociological or personal grounds. Severe depression, with the open threat of suicide, if pregnancy is not terminated cannot in itself constitute an indication for termination. The indication which it does constitute is of course for appropriate treatment of the depression. Termination in itself (in fact) is often a dangerous treatment for depression (quite apart from being ethically unjustifiable). Intense exacerbation of depression with additional guilt, remorse, and occasionally severely paranoid ideas, can follow termination, when the mother comes to realise that, even

perhaps at her own insistence, her child has been killed."

Similarly, in the section on eczema the fluorinated steroids are recommended, including polythene occlusion and preparations including neomycin are rather freely approved.

It is stated in the section that the barbiturates and the sulphonamides cause drug rashes most frequently, whereas in general practice, ampicillin, which is not mentioned here, is one of the commoner causes.

Penicillin is recommended in the treatment of measles apparently at all ages, and often in the book incidence figures are not given for many diseases, although that for schizophrenia, which was singled out in our previous review, has now been incorporated.

The sections of the book have not always been inter-related, and for example in the first chapter, Gaucher's disease and Tay-Sachs disease are mentioned but neither are in the index which might be puzzling for students for whom this book is partly designed.

In general however, this book is a good summary of medical practice, and selling at £1.75 it does represent outstanding value for money.

The Principles and Practice of Medicine (1973). Tenth edition. Edited by SIR STANLEY DAVIDSON AND JOHN MACLEOD. (1971). London and Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone. Pp. 1196. Price: £3.00.

Davidson's textbook is one of the other most popular books used in British medical schools. The latest edition is the tenth and will be the last edited by Sir Stanley Davidson himself. It includes a new chapter on immunology, a subject which certainly merits inclusion in all modern textbooks of medicine. It is unfortunate that this chapter is not written with the clarity of many other parts of the book.

The presentation is extremely attractive, the print used is big, and the numerous bold headings make sections particularly easy to absorb. There is rather more discussion than in Houston and Joiner, and there are more diagrams and a few colour plates. These add to clarity. More important in general practice is that in several sections including psychiatry and obesity there is an awareness of the general practitioner's point of view and practical difficulties in the field. Incidence figures for many diseases are not given and it must be difficult for some students to grasp what conditions are common. One of the best features of this book is the deliberate attempt at the end of most sections to consider the possibilities of prevention.

It is a pity that throughout the book there is no indication of which drug names are approved chemical names, and which are proprietary trade names, and both forms are used in different places.

In general this edition has fully maintained the reputation of this book which is now perhaps the most useful general textbook of medicine for practising general practitioners.