

BOOK REVIEWS

Diabetes and its management (1973). OAKLEY, W. G., PYKE, A. and TAYLOR, K. W. Pp. 183. London: Blackwell. Price: £2.25.

The authors claim, with every justification, that their book has been written as a practical guide for clinicians. Their information and statistics are drawn from experience gained by caring for about 3,500 diabetics at Kings College Hospital diabetic clinic. The opinions resulting from such a study in both depth and breadth provide a valuable contribution to the already voluminous literature on diabetes.

The book has been carefully balanced. The theoretical aspect of the subject is discussed concisely under the headings of Biochemical Basis, Insulin, Aetiology and Pathology and is completely up to date. The reader is left with the impression that we are still very far from understanding the nature of this disease despite the Nobel Prizes that have been won by research workers.

Those sections of the book, as one would expect from its title, dealing with clinical matters are expanded very adequately. Maturity onset as a type has been poorly defined by some authors and furthermore they have not all been in agreement. Oakley and his colleagues have been more precise and demonstrated how obesity, with or without diabetes, creates an increased insulin response to the stimulus of a glucose load.

The Basic Diet Card, an expansion of the Laurence Line Ration Diet, is convenient, easy to understand and comprehensive. Drug therapy is concise and clear. Probably the most valuable contribution the book provides for a general practitioner is contained in the chapters dealing with complications and prognosis. There is little added to the already existing view that complications seem to occur independently of diabetes, good or bad. Timely emphasis is given to the real incidence of eye, cardiovascular, neuropathic and renal complications with their rate of progress towards noticeable disability. Hearteningly, the picture is shown to be less gloomy than many of us believed.

General practice provides a fertile opportunity for good field work in a disease such as diabetes, as each general practitioner has an average of 25 such patients. He could not do better than be guided by the contents of this book and if he wishes to probe more deeply still, there is a comprehensive section at the end dealing with further reading.

C. H. STEWART-HESS

Babies and young children (1972). ILLINGWORTH, RONALD and SYLVIA. Pp. 328. Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. Price: £2.50.

Part of the family doctor's satisfaction in medicine springs not least from his task of cultivating understanding and independence in his patients. (Indeed, one index of his professional success over the years is the degree to which he works himself

out of his job.) But this process is time consuming: and he is often in need of material, written in simple and straightforward English which he can give, lend, or recommend to his parents—particularly with young parents rearing, or about to rear, their family.

This book has proved its worth in this field—witness its five editions in 18 years. It is full of practical guidance, the distillation of long experience; is written in simple, unequivocal English; and is enlivened by a lot of delightful sketches and some equally delightful photographs. But don't wait till the child is born—give it to the mother to read during her pregnancy.

"It is not" said the preface to the first edition "intended for doctors". Why not? They cannot, for one thing, recommend it with the enthusiasm it deserves if they have not read it: and it provides an excellent talking point for co-ordinating the views of health visitor, practice nurse and practitioner.

Two minor criticisms: first, it should be possible by now to list (in order of frequency) the foreign materials—from boot polish to "Windowlene"—that children swallow, distinguishing those that really need swift action from those that don't. Second, books must be bought before they can be read, and £2.50, even these days, will limit the audience. Could not the opportunity have been taken to issue the book cheaply as a paperback? It deserves it.

H. J. WRIGHT

Outline of Fractures (1972). ADAMS, JOHN CRAWFORD. 6th Edition. Pp. 312. Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. Price: £2.25.

That this book has now had its sixth edition published is good evidence of its popularity, a popularity which is well justified by its clarity and orderly presentation. It is recommended to those who do not aspire to specialist standards but have occasionally to deal with fractures in their day-to-day work.

The well-illustrated text does not assume any considerable previous knowledge, and this makes it suitable for medical students, young hospital doctors, and general practitioners whose absence from casualty departments for many years makes them feel that their knowledge of fractures is getting rusty. For those who wish to go more deeply into any part of the text an excellent bibliography is provided.

J. F. BURDON

The Complete Plain Words (1954). Reprinted 1972. GOWERS, SIR ERNEST. Pp. 265. London: Penguin. Price: 40p.

Most books provide information: few change attitudes. *The Complete Plain Words*, however, does both.

Sir Ernest Gowers was commissioned by the Treasury about 1948 to write a book to counteract the low standard of English in many official

documents. He succeeded and even seven years after his death virtually all that he wrote still applies.

Many general practitioners now spend hours reading official documents and those who are active in the medical organisations may have to write papers themselves. They will find in this book an outspoken criticism of many mistakes in official publications and a clear guide to good style.

It is the best book of its kind that I know and the style of the *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners* is now based on it.

D. J. PEREIRA GRAY

Gastroenterology (1973). I. A. D. BOUCHIER. Pp. 292+X. London: Baillière Tindall. Price: £2.00.

Gastroenterological problems are frequently encountered in general practice, particularly syndromes that are characterised by abdominal pain, diarrhoea or vomiting, either singly or in combination. While many such syndromes are mild in severity and self-limiting in duration, the fact that they may be the herald of serious underlying pathology must always be in the forefront of a general practitioner's mind. A wise general practitioner will refresh his memory periodically and will seek to learn the new concepts in the aetiology, pathology, presentation, investigation and treatment of disease. Such refreshment may be obtained from attendance at continuing education courses or by reading well-written and well-presented texts. Dr Bouchier has written such a text and there will be few general practitioners who will not benefit from reading his book.

Gastroenterology is the latest in the series of *Concise Medical Textbooks* and is extremely good value. The author states in his preface that it is his hope that the book is both balanced and coherent. It is both. It covers the common and the uncommon conditions in an easily readable and, generally, easily understandable form. The sections on physiological function are so condensed that they require careful reading if they are to be understood. Undoubtedly the book will appeal to the generalist more than to the specialist and will be appreciated most by those who are already acquainted with the subject. A copy should be on every general practitioner's bookshelf.

The author emphasises that the presentation that he has adopted is essentially personal, but few would take exception to his views and the order of the list of contents demonstrates his logical approach to the subject.

I found only one small typographical error, on page 171, where the word lipoproteins is repeated unnecessarily.

H. W. K. ACHESON

A concise textbook of gastroenterology (1973). LANGMAN, M. J. S. Pp. 192. Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. Price: £1.25. The author has attempted the formidable task of combining three major areas of clinical practice;

medicine, surgery, and general practice, and produced a small, comprehensive, up-to-date and readable text. The concise nature of the book has inevitably led to brevity (192 pages, 21 chapters) but this in a sense is its virtue; it allows a rapid appreciation of a disease or situation, or area of disease. Further information is available via the reference section.

Separate chapters are devoted to oesophageal disorders, peptic ulcer, haematemesis and melaena, pernicious anaemia and the stomach, gastro-intestinal cancer and polyposis, biliary tract, and pancreatic disease. The commoner disorders are dealt with in useful detail and it is illuminating to find medical and surgical disciplines united under a common patho-physiological basis. In the field of peptic ulcer and gall bladder disease, however, the impact of Childs' work (1972) has yet to be felt, providing as it does, a new concept in aetiology and management.

In the five chapters concerned with the liver, the author has managed to convey precisely and in some detail what the reader wants to know. This section encompasses jaundice, hepatic function, hepatomegaly, hepatitis, cirrhosis and other liver disease, ascites, liver failure, and a useful chapter on portal hypertension. It is perhaps a pity, in a work of this calibre, that no reference is made to the value of mannitol in preventing renal failure in patients undergoing operation for obstructive jaundice (Dawson; 1965, 1968).

The remaining chapters are primarily concerned with intestinal disorders. Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are outlined well, with useful information on treatment. The malabsorption syndromes, always difficult to comprehend, are elucidated clearly. The management of fluid and electrolyte balance in intestinal obstruction is clearly defined, though few would agree that early small bowel obstruction is relatively painless. The resumé of appendicitis is disappointing in that the appendix mass as an entity is not adequately clarified. Also, in stating that acute intestinal ischaemia presents as an acute abdominal emergency, the author overlooks the earlier clinical picture of intestinal colic alone; the stage at which surgical treatment is more likely to be feasible. Two further chapters cover intestinal parasites and infective diarrhoea; written well with up-to-date advice on management. Sadly, "summer" diarrhoea appears in yet another text; non-specific and probably viral in origin, this is far and away the most commonly occurring diarrhoea, now recognised all the year round.

The final chapter is most valuable. Indications for, and how to perform common tests of gastro-intestinal function are coupled with the results and their interpretation.

Despite the few criticisms, this book is worth buying. It can be carried in the pocket, and gives more down-to-earth advice on how to treat a patient than many texts. It will be found useful by both undergraduate and postgraduate alike, as