

was removed a gradual decline set in, until the Second World War ended its active existence.

Professor Mair produces an illuminating letter from Sir Walter M. Fletcher of the Medical Research Council: "The aspect that chiefly strikes me", he wrote, "both for novelty and germinal importance is your Institute as a *training school* for practitioners. There is nothing like it, I think, elsewhere, and I hope from this seed will spring a training system all over the country." Much that Mackenzie was striving for in 1919 has now taken shape.

This is a biography which all who are interested in the development of the mind of a great physician, in the evolution of general practice and its future should read. As is not unusual in these days a few criticisms of the detailed production of the book can be made. The format is good; it is generously illustrated, but there is no list of plates. There are a few 'literals' which should have been picked up and one or two dates have suffered—for instance Linne's *Genu Plantarum* was published in 1737 and not in 1838 as stated. But these are minor errors in a most readable biography.

R. M. S. MCCONAGHEY

Illness and general practice. BENTSEN, BENT GUTTORM 1970. Pp. 192. Oslo: Universitets forlaget. Price \$16. Distributed in UK by Cannon House, Park Farm Road, Folkestone, Kent.

This book recounts the methods and findings of a retrospective survey of general practice in the Nes municipality of Norway, covering the years of 1952–1955. The aim of the study was "to construct a picture of the entire medical practice, morbidity, and consequences of disease in the population of a geographically limited area".

By comparison with Britain, Norway is a country of relatively isolated, small and static communities. In rural areas migration rates from and into a doctor's practice are low (in Dr Bentsen's practice at that time apparently less than 5 per cent per year). This in itself has obvious investigative advantages. Against this must be set the difficulties of epidemiological research in a Health Service system which does not require patients formally to 'register' with a specific doctor—but leaves him free to move from one practitioner to another. In such circumstances any attempt to establish a complete picture of community morbidity necessarily involves a major investigative effort. Perhaps the most impressive feature of the first section of this book ("Problems—Materials—Methods") is the thoroughness with which Dr Bentsen approaches his task and the clarity with which he defines his method.

The remainder of the book describes his findings under three headings—"Medical Care": "Morbidity": and "The Consequences of Disease".

The section on Medical Care is concerned with consultation rates and some of the factors affecting these; with the use of investigations, and treatment

procedures; and with referral rates and admission to hospital. Both the similarities to, and the differences from, English practice are striking when Bentsen's material is compared with the English scene of that time. Perhaps most notable is the lower overall consultation rate per person "at risk" per year (little more than half the English figure): and the different pattern of consultation rate with age groups. Unfortunately, however Bentsen does not here distinguish between 'initial consultation' rate (largely determined by the patient) and 'follow up' consultation rate (largely determined by the doctor). Thus the interpretation of national differences, particularly in relation to the mode of payment to the doctor, is impossible.

It is however the comparative national prevalence rates of chronic illness which will hold the greatest potential interest for many readers. Here, the third section of the book ("Morbidity") runs into considerable difficulties. Some of these are obvious and inherent. First, the difficulties created by definition and nosology—particularly since the diagnostic labels attached in general practice are necessarily based on the clinical rather than laboratory data. The second, the errors inherent in reported (rather than total) morbidity records. But, thirdly, difficulties created by the methodology which Bentsen chose—in contrast, for example, to that used by the RCGP/RGO study of 1955 in Britain. For whereas the latter used a large population over a short period (one year), Bentsen used a small population (approximately 6,000) over a longer period (four years). This makes it difficult to have any confidence in the comparative national tabulations (e.g. table 55 relating to heart and hypertensive disease). Comparison is made more difficult also by the fact that the figures quoted from the RCGP/RGO report do not appear to tally with those contained in the report itself.

Difficulties of nosology are, of course, at their greatest in considering mental disorders. But here, two of Bentsen's findings correspond interestingly with British experience. First that patients recorded as having emotional disorders consult their doctors more frequently than those who have no such disorders recorded. Secondly that such patients also have many more somatic conditions recorded.

The reader, therefore, is often left with impressions of comparative morbidity rather than precise comparisons. Bentsen recognises this and in his review of asthma—bronchitis—emphysema remarks that "it seems certain that these diseases occur far less often... than in English investigations. The comparison, however, is difficult because of the differences in methods of investigation".

The final section of the book has many constructively critical comments to make on the organisation of Health Services and on the conduct of practices. Bentsen argues cogently for a careful balance between primary generalist, and

secondary specialist, care; for a systematic working routine in general practice; and for 'full' diagnoses, comprising somatic, psychodynamic and social components. "Only when all three are taken into account" he writes "do we get a full picture of the patient's situation".

This work is a major contribution to the literature of general practice. Pinsent, in his introduction, to the book, refers to it as "a work of scholarship which will be read, referred to, and respected by colleagues throughout the world". A fitting and worthy comment.

H. J. WRIGHT

The Use of Cannabis (1971). World Health Organisation Technical Report Series No. 478 Geneva: World Health Organisation.

It would be surprising if the WHO had not produced an authoritative lucid summary of the present state of knowledge of the use of cannabis. The report discusses some of the characteristics of the user of cannabis, its effects on man, and suggests what further research is needed. It is pointed out that the great majority of cannabis users never proceed to the use of morphine-type drugs. There are likely to be important socio-cultural and personal factors which contribute to any apparent progressions from cannabis use to other dependence-producing drugs. The type of person who is a "moderate" user of cannabis is different from the "heavy" user.

The immediate and delayed effects of cannabis are described. The acute reactions tend to be dose-dependent. The review of literature suggested that the degree and nature of any relationships that may exist between the prolonged and or intensive use of cannabis and various long-term effects has not been established. The authors were of the opinion that many regular users of cannabis exhibit psychic dependence, as do some less frequent but relatively "heavy" users, but the great majority of people who use it only occasionally do not exhibit psychic or any other dependence on cannabis. Further research is needed to establish evidence of tolerance and physical dependence.

This report is not designed as a textbook for general practitioners and certainly does not fulfil this purpose, despite the comprehensive review of almost 200 references. I consider that there are other books on drug abuse in this country which would be more useful for the general practitioner who only rarely sees the effects of cannabis in a medical context.

R. H. WILKINS

Radology for general practitioners and medical students (1971). SUTTON, DAVID, Second edition. Pp. 101. Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. Price: £1.25.

Twelve articles for *The Practitioner* were republished in book form in 1965. A further chapter was added in 1971 when the whole text was revised for the second edition.

Unfortunately, the 13 chapters do not make a book. Each chapter or pair of chapters deals with an organ or body system but the sub-headings have no consistent framework, being variously divided according to anatomy, method of radiological investigation, clinical purpose or diagnosis. Small print is used sometimes to describe a technique, sometimes to give lists and sometimes to paraphrase other work. The use of italics defies classification even within the same sub-heading. The English language is on occasions hammered into submission by specialist enthusiasm, P.2. "neuroradiological techniques have been perfected and improved", P.3. "the radiologist's armamentarium", and only too rarely does the author blossom into a personal style, P.45 "the whole renal circulation can be beautifully demonstrated... This is the method I prefer."

There are 82 x-ray illustrations, which are sometimes two pages out of phase with the text. Most of the x-rays illustrate the text in a clear manner but gall stones are "shown floating" (Fig. 19B) whilst in the narrative they "sediment" —which is confusing to the non-specialist.

One reference is given and there is no glossary. This, to say the least, is inadequate when the text is studded with opinions and with names in a manner appropriate to "night ride".

Occasionally (P.44 on renal x-rays) the author forgets the audience that he believes himself to be addressing and gives a concise account of a procedure, a comparison with other methods, a discussion on the relevance to clinical management and even a brief explanation of why the malfunction of the body produces a particular x-ray picture. This shows great promise for a companion volume aimed at consultants and nurses but in the meantime "it behoves the practitioner" (P.23) not only to be aware of the complications of cortisone therapy, as advised, but also to look elsewhere for a book that will be helpful to him in practice.

R. LEFEVER