

for many years such as the mass chest x-ray service for detecting pulmonary tuberculosis. In fact, this has been so effective that perhaps one should now question its value for the future.

Before considering any form of medical screening, the criteria listed by Wilson in 1965 should first be applied. This list contains such statements as the detection method being cheap and easily applicable and that there should be an effective treatment once the condition is discovered. The full list contains ten criteria, some of which are extremely difficult to meet.

Further contributors to this book go on to discuss such topics as the economics of screening, the problems of middle age and the various techniques of screening. These are in addition to valuable contributions on specific diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and anaemia.

A final comment from this most interesting book may be made from the chapter on that most popular of screening procedures, the cervical smear. Undoubtedly, some of its popularity lies in the fact that it is one of the very few investigations for which a fee is paid! It comes as a surprise to find that Papanicolaou introduced his staining techniques as long ago as 1928. However, there is a need for caution in adopting screening too readily as the complete answer to the problems of a disease. Although cervical smears were first introduced as a population screening procedure in British Columbia more than 25 years ago, there is still insufficient evidence to show that the incidence of carcinoma of the cervix has been reduced in this population.

Nonetheless, any doctor who considers himself a primary care physician must read this well written and absorbing book as it will undoubtedly provide him/her with considerable food for thought.

K. J. BOLDEN

**Communicable diseases: An epidemiological approach** (1973), 2nd ed. PARRY, W. H. Pp. 194. London: English Universities Press. Prices: Boards edition, £2.85, Unibook edition: £1.45.

Second editions of a book can either redress the mistaken judgements and material of the first edition, or sadly, fail to recapture the cohesion of the first edition and fail to bring material up to date. Dr Parry's book falls into the latter category. Information which has become available since 1964 is frequently either absent or too obviously added to the well-written text of the first edition.

The author states clearly that his intended audience is medical students and nurses, and in providing a well-organised framework outlining the scope of communicable diseases, he succeeds in this goal.

Although some sections of the book are informative and of practical use to the practising family doctor, there are other fields in which there is misleading information, or lack of what would now be regarded as proper emphasis.

Without doubt the best section relates to water-borne and food-borne diseases, in particular salmonellosis and other forms of food poisoning, and is well worth reading. The section on diseases transmitted by animals and pets is at first sight promising; however, practical detail is neglected for disorders such as psittacosis, toxoplasmosis, hydatid disease, and toxocarisis. The chapter on venereal diseases is too short and would have been better omitted altogether.

A large section on air-borne diseases begins well with cogent worries that the increasing incidence of diphtheria in southern and western Europe may lead to more sporadic cases in this country: it is prudent still to submit throat swabs from patients with severe tonsilitis to laboratories which routinely use tellurite plates for the routine examination of throat swabs. With a decrease of effective vaccination as a result of apathy by medical profession and laymen alike, and the recent worries engendered by adverse publicity of the pertussis vaccine, whooping cough as well as diphtheria may re-emerge as major problems in Britain.

The discussion of less exotic bacterial infections is bedevilled by a poor understanding of current antibiotic prescribing policy. The article on virus diseases betrays an uncertainty of touch, highlighted by the statements that *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* is a virus rather than a mycoplasma, and the retention of *Bedsoniae* in the group of virus diseases.

With great interest in view of the universal practical problem of recognising tropical disease in foreign travellers and immigrants, I turned to the chapters on travel, immigrants, and tropical diseases. With even greater disappointment I turned from them, finding there little practical advice.

In conclusion, this book is not recommended for general practitioners.

B. T. B. MANNERS

**The Medical Secretary's Handbook** (1975). Third edition. DRURY, M. Pp 328. London: Baillière Tindall. Price: £3.50.

The third edition of a book indicates that it is selling well, and this may be all that needs to be said about it except to indicate those who might wish to buy it. Books are needed at all stages of training and for the experienced operator to use for reference or as a refresher. If a book tries to be primer, advanced text, reference book, all in one, it usually fails to do any of these jobs well.

The medical secretary taking up a post in general practice, unless she is to be flung in at the deep end, should know most of the data presented for her in this book before she is left unsupervised. One must assume that the book is intended for those who have done basic secretarial tasks such as shorthand and elementary book-keeping and who now aspire to become medical secretaries. I have no doubt that it serves this end well.

Much of the information given, however, is incomplete. For example, a list of *Equipment used for treatment* includes such items as *Spencer-Wells forceps* without any indication of how to recognise such a thing, or why a secretary might want to. It is difficult to see how the bald names of specialised appliances can aid a secretary, and one cannot escape the conclusion that the text should be well-pruned. A selective reader will have no problems, but a junior secretary might find the book more difficult than it need be.

J. F. BURDON

**Dermatology—An Illustrated Guide** (1973). FRY, LIONEL. Pp. 154. London: Update Publications. Price: £4.75.

The recognition of skin diseases is a problem in general practice. Trainees have reported that they find skins the most difficult part of their introduction to family practice, and unfortunately

this is an aspect of medicine where previous experience is almost essential. One cannot work out the diagnosis from taking an elaborate history and unless one has detailed knowledge of dermatology the diagnosis of most rashes cannot be deduced. What does happen is that practitioners recognise patterns and, once this has been done, diagnosis can often be made, almost at sight.

A good skin atlas is essential in most practices, but they are usually expensive, and the diseases chosen are often more relevant to hospital out-patients than the conditions normally seen in general practice. *Update* however, have now produced an excellent atlas eminently suitable for family practice. The pictures are good and clear, and there are short concise descriptions of common conditions which are practical and useful.

This is one of the few textbooks I would miss if it was not close at hand in my consulting room, and it is the best skin atlas I know.

D. J. PEREIRA GRAY

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