

Depression—The Blue Plague. (1975). C. A. H. WATTS. London: Care and Welfare Library, Priory Press. Price: £2.50.

The Care and Welfare Library series are always well produced with an attractive book in good binding. The subjects chosen are of general interest, the style is readable and the content easily understood. However, I feel that these books tend to aim at too large an audience and consequently cannot deal with the subject in sufficient depth to meet the needs of the experienced general practitioner.

This publication is no exception. Dr Watts is well known for his interest in the field of psychiatry while working in his rural general practice. He has dealt with the whole field of depression as it presents to the practitioner. The part which has to be played by the doctor, relatives, community, social worker in the management of a patient with depression is discussed. The problems which arise and the difficulties experienced both by the patient and his relatives are considered sympathetically.

A striking feature of the book is the use of frequent examples from Dr Watt's experience to illustrate the points which he is trying to make. This certainly keeps the text lively and holds the reader's interest, but inevitably the discussion tends to be rather superficial as non medical people will read the book.

This publication has little to offer the experienced general practitioner except a sympathetic approach to the depressed patient but would certainly be a valuable addition to the reading list of the undergraduate and the vocational trainee.

K. J. BOLDEN

Medical Annual (1975). SIR RONALD BODLEY SCOTT AND SIR JAMES FRASER, BT. 93rd issue. Bristol: John Wright.

The Medical Annual series is a standard collection in any medical library worth its salt. It has something for everyone, but by virtue of this will contain much of lesser interest to many readers.

In the excellent preface to the 1975 edition, the omission of a special section on 'Publications from General Practice' is explained by the tragic death of Doctor I. Stokoe who was responsible for this chapter in previous years and for whom it had been impossible to find a successor in time for this issue.

Medical Annuals are divided into two unequal parts, the first consisting of special articles of general and topical interest, whilst the latter, and by far the larger part, contains a review of the year's work categorised under specialist headings in broadly alphabetical order. It is, therefore, a little puzzling that "C"ommunity medicine is hidden between "P"lastic surgery and "R"adiodiagnosis.

The special articles set the tone and are worthy of detailed comment.

"Depression in General Practice"—written as it is by a non-general practitioner—gives a useful summary of the drug treatment of this common disorder, but the description of the symptomatology and management is mundane.

This is followed by an interesting account of the theoretical basis of ultrasound and quick survey of its clinical application mainly to obstetrics and cardiology, emphasising its importance as a non-invasive investigation.

The third special article on "Why Clinical Pharmacology?" reiterates the 1944 Goodenough Committee's recommendation on the need to strengthen the bonds between the disciplines of pharmacology and clinical medicine. The importance of the contribution of the planned controlled clinical trial to modern therapeutics is stressed. Although the teaching objectives for clinical pharmacology are listed, clarity appears to have been sacrificed for the sake of brevity.

The fourth topic entitled "Trends in Medical Protection" is more appropriate as an introduction to the annual report of a medical defence association even though it does highlight the threats to the "doctor-patient relationship" that may be raised by future legislation.

When recognised experts have been asked to review the year's important developments in their own fields, it would be presumptuous of me to do other than make a few generalised comments.

A glance at the subject titles selected by these experts is in itself instructive, indicating as they must the direction of recent trends.

The essence of their chosen topic is frequently summarised by the last paragraph of each section and there is a wealth of bibliography for the reader who wishes to pursue the problems in greater depth.

In their conclusion the editors have provided "Books of the Year" shopping lists which must surely be of interest to clinical and college tutors alike and to any others who are responsible for the purchase of books for post-graduate medical institutions.

SIMON JENKINS

The Speed Culture: Amphetamine Use and Abuse in America (1975). GRINSPOON, L. and HEDBLUM, P. Pp. 340. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press. Price: £8.25.

It is odd that science should provoke so much controversy. One would have thought that facts—especially those derived by the methodical testing of hypotheses—would be unarguable. But the days are past when propositions as momentous as a theory of gravitation could be deduced from observations of Newtonian simplicity. That the pejorative word simplistic is what we have made