

**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

out of old-fashioned simplicity must mean that we are positively suspicious of the easy answer.

Least of all can there be an easy answer about amphetamines. In this American book a psychiatrist and an author (*sic*) examine the enormous literature about these drugs and come to the conclusion that there are extremely few reasons for prescribing them and very many for eschewing them altogether. Unfortunately the writers seem not only to have arrived at these conclusions, but also to have started out with them. When they decided to write this book, amphetamines were being used by vast numbers of Americans: there were at least 12 billion tablets prescribed legally in 1971 in the U.S., and since amphetamines are so easy to manufacture, the additional illegal sale was incalculably large.

Grinspoon, as a psychiatrist, had prescribed amphetamines liberally, but was beginning to see some bad results; he was well past the stage where one well-known London psychiatrist has become fixed, that of regarding these drugs as excellent, except if they get into the wrong hands. The result of Grinspoon's doubts is a vast review of the literature, well written and well produced; it is discursive, but easy to read, with good discussions of drug-taking in general and the medical indications—or lack of them—but in the end they can offer only the conclusion that "There is simply no easy answer to the question of what a free society can do about a drug that is so obviously attractive and obviously dangerous".

To whom ought your reviewer recommend this book? Does anyone ever read a book because of a review? Should reviews be only in absolute terms—Yes, go and get hold of this essential book, or No, pay it no attention since it is quite worthless? If *The Speed Culture* had not been sent to me I would certainly not have read it; having been obliged to read it closely, I cannot say it has done very much more to make me a careful prescriber than would a re-reading of Lawrence's *Clinical Pharmacology*. If, on the other hand, anyone is looking for a good book about amphetamines and their dangers, this is it.

SIMON BARLEY

**Epidemiology—An Introductory Text.** (1974).

J. S. MAUSNER and A. K. BAHN. Pp. 377.  
U.S.A.: W. B. Saunders Co. Price: £6·65.

General practitioners now in their middle years were fortunate if their undergraduate education made any reference to epidemiology. Doctors Mausner and Bahn, (Judith and Anita), have

written an excellent small and reasonably priced book. It is easy to read, easy to understand and well illustrated by suitable examples, many derived from work done in the United Kingdom.

Its main purpose is to describe epidemiological technique and method, but in so doing it provides much useful information about the epidemiology of specific diseases. It should become mandatory reading for vocational trainees and their teachers.

J. S. McCORMICK

**Book of Child Care** (1975). JOLLY, H. Pp. 620.  
London: Allen and Unwin. Price: £6·50.

Dr Hugh Jolly has written an excellent book for parents to which they can turn with assurance of finding practical help stripped of the myths which used to surround the nursery. The first half about the healthy child can be read straight through, while the second half on the sick child can be used for reference when there are troubles.

As might be expected of Dr Jolly he writes well and imaginatively on the emotional development of children and the management of behaviour problems. The written word may not however help parents who have problems with 'gut' reactions and not their cognitive processes, but this is a limitation of books. Because it appears encyclopaedic it is tempting to criticise the detail. I would have liked to see more discussion on pair-bonding; the expectations determining gender role and behaviour. The chapter on adoption was disappointing in not discussing the problem of the teenager who wants to meet and know its natural parents, which is a common and difficult experience. In places the book is surprisingly dogmatic. The subject of pertussis immunisation is dismissed without introducing the admittedly difficult concept of relative risks. Are all pets as harmless as he would have us believe? An addition which might be welcome is an appendix with the addresses of the various helping agencies and societies.

I feel embarrassed about the expectation Dr Jolly has of doctors . . . 'Today's doctors have been trained to communicate in a very different manner from their predecessors'. It is to be hoped that our present day trainees will have experienced this, but I can remember nothing about it for my generation.

The *Book of Child Care* is to be recommended as an excellent bible to all parents who can afford it and who won't be put off by a slight middle-class bias—silver candlesticks, rather expensive food, and nursery paraphernalia.

PETER TOMSON