

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