
BOOK REVIEWS

WOMEN IN MEDICINE

*Proceedings of a conference
organized by the DHSS
4-5 July 1975
HMSO, London (1976)*

I wonder how many women in medicine realized that this conference to discuss their problems and hopes even took place at Sunningdale in July 1975. Relatively few women were there, nevertheless the conference was attended by a limited but worthy selection of people representing a variety of interested bodies. One of the main themes was the lack of communication about opportunities for women to keep in touch with current medicine, or to return to medicine when they have completed their families.

The conference emphasized that women doctors are no less able than men and the fact that they wish to raise families as well as practise medicine does not alter this ability, although it does pose problems. The maintenance of skills and confidence over a period of absence from active practice and the provision of part-time work of first-class quality, were the most important matters considered.

General practice was regarded as being a relatively easy field in which to arrange part-time training or continuing work, and very little of the conference was taken up discussing this aspect, although there was a stimulating paper by Professor Marshall Marinker on women in general practice. The availability of hospital posts at appropriate grades and in specialties wanted by women as part-time work came in for more discussion and criticism.

The common factor in all these very readable papers is the need for flexibility and more money.

The report concludes with a summary of the papers and discussions by Sir Henry Yellowlees, and some valuable information from the Department of Health and Social Security in the appendices, particularly the memoranda on re-employment of women doctors (HM (69)6), and the women doctors retainer scheme (HM (72)42), which the conference realized reached far too few of those for whom they were intended—both doctors and administrators.

This is an encouraging and optimistic report and should be read by all those

involved in medical education and certainly all women doctors attempting to combine domesticity with realization of their professional potential.

JANE RICHARDS

THE NORMAL CHILD

Ronald S. Illingworth

*Churchill Livingstone
Edinburgh (1975)*

326 pages. Price £5.50

A mother consulted me the other day about a developmental problem in her child. When I had listened to her for some time I suggested a possible course of action to deal with the problem. The mother nodded in agreement but added "Illingworth says that in *The Normal Child*."

I have on my bookshelves many books in the 'bringing-up-baby' genre, ranging from Darwin to the most radical of modern 'experts'. My fourth edition of *The Normal Child* is the most thumbed-through book in the collection.

The first sentence to catch my eye on opening this, the sixth edition, was: "The baby should never be taken into the parents' bed to sleep." "Oh dear, there it is again", I said to myself guiltily. As usual my son, a few months old, had slept between us for half the night; nothing else quietens him so quickly as the warmth of our bed. Many families I know are also guilty of this frowned on habit and admit to it only when I own up to doing the same.

I worry about the effects of such dogmatic statements in a book such as this. Luckily it seems that when such a statement does appear, it is quietly disregarded, although it may generate varying degrees of guilt in the readers.

With this solitary exception the book fulfils my criteria for a good book on problems in child care. There is throughout an air of awareness and understanding of current child-rearing practice. The advice given is uniformly sensible and backed by an obvious wealth of experience, with full references to encourage further reading. Much new writing and two new references (to 1974), an extra rhyme or two, and a slightly more acerbic tone to the comments on some choice gleanings from

the corpus of psychoanalytical writing are noticeable. The print is smaller and not as clear as in previous editions.

It is still the best book of its kind and I recommend it to all who are concerned with giving guidance to families with young children. Common sense is not enough for this most important work; as Balint once said in a different connection, this book is full of the uncommon variety.

G. CURTIS JENKINS

THE BATTLE AGAINST BACTERIA: A FRESH LOOK

Peter Baldry

*Cambridge University Press
Cambridge (1976)*

179 pages. Price £4.50

From Hippocrates to Watanabe via Jenner and Pasteur, Koch and Ehrlich, Fleming and Waksman, Anderson and Maxwell Finland, the reader will learn more about the men behind the microbes than about the bacteria themselves, not that he will be any the worse for that; even if knowledge doesn't grow on trees, the facts about the world around us are there for the 'prepared mind' to perceive.

This is good reading for anyone who is preparing his mind for microbiology, whether student, graduate, or practitioner. The last chapter, newly added to this edition, is particularly relevant for family doctors faced with the home management of D and V or urinary tract infections, for which each post brings new pressure to use the latest antibiotic with the widest application.

The author has that rare skill of writing simply and clearly about ideas and facts with which the reader may not be familiar. Among his many illustrations he shows Pasteur watching a child being immunized against rabies, a listerian operation at Aberdeen, the group at Oxford working on the chemistry of penicillin, and the Beecham team who identified the penicillin nucleus.

Then there are the near misses. For example, what would have happened to bacteriology if Ehrlich had succumbed to the tuberculosis which interrupted his career for two years before he began his work on antitoxin or chemotherapy? How much sooner might we have had