

Book Reviews

penicillin if his chief had supported Fleming in the early stages?

Not essential reading perhaps, but, equally, not an easy book to put down if you have a taste for background.

G. I. WATSON

PRACTICE—A HANDBOOK OF PRIMARY MEDICAL CARE (PART 1)

Jack Cormack, Marshall Marinker & David Morrell

*Kluwer-Harrap Handbooks
Isleworth (1976)*

172 pages.

Price £6.50 each instalment

The essence of general practice has eluded the authors of many books. There is a temptation to imitate the classical textbooks of medicine, and there is the snare of offering soft platitudes and lip service only to whole-person medicine and the importance of the family. *Practice* is described as a handbook and the preface claims it is not a catalogue of differential diagnosis, nor a set of didactic instruction, and I certainly found it an excellent treatise on the management of clinical situations.

The handbook, which is to be issued in five instalments involving 37 authors, is divided into four sections: the diagnostic process, treatment, the complaint, and continuing care. The first instalment contains the whole of the first two sections, and eight of the 70 essays on the complaint. The seven essays on continuing care are not included in this instalment.

The chapters on the diagnostic process are a joy to read. The section of treatment might have been headed management and have included a section on patient comprehension, compliance, and satisfaction. The chapters on the complaint are based on presenting symptoms such as fits and faints, the red eye, and the patient who complains of cough. I found little to quarrel with in the details, but would have preferred a more comprehensive approach. For example, Dr Collings writes an excellent chapter on the patient complaining of chest pain, and describes the relief of pain in myocardial infarction, but fails to discuss home treatment versus hospital treatment, or the management of arrhythmias, although he is an expert in both subjects. Also, infuriating platitudes have crept in. We all know quinsy may require surgical intervention. What we all want to know is, when?

Although the list of future chapters is available, it is difficult to know exactly what will be included, a fault which lies with the editors rather than the authors. For instance, I suspect we are not due for a chapter on diabetes, which was briefly discussed in an interesting chapter on incidental findings.

The handbook is in loose-leaf form and we are promised updating facilities and a continuing dialogue with the authors, which is encouraging for, at the moment, while it makes excellent reading, the book is not perfect for reference purposes.

I would not only like to see *Practice* upgraded to a textbook of general practice, I would like to see it become the textbook of general practice, as it is at present the best book of its kind I have read.

P.R.V. TOMSON

LEGAL ASPECTS OF GENERAL PRACTICE (2nd EDITION)

Bernard Knight

Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh

(1976)

254 pages. Price £4.50

The first edition of this book was published in 1972. In this, the second edition, the contents have been revised to incorporate changes made in the law prior to late 1975. New sections have been added, including those concerning the medico-legal practices of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland. The book is written specifically for medical students, although other members of the medical profession will benefit from reading it. It aims to give guidance in the everyday medico-legal problems that arise in hospital and general medical practice.

The author is a barrister and member of the Royal College of Pathologists and obviously has a wide medical and legal background. His approach is practical, and the book is intended to teach forensic medicine as opposed to specialized forensic pathology.

The contents are divided into two parts. There are several chapters dealing with general topics, including medical ethics, the General Medical Council, compensation and certification. The remaining chapters are devoted to clinical subjects ranging from abortion and divorce to firearm injuries and infant deaths. The range of topics is wide, and each subject is dealt with thoroughly and is equally relevant to the hospital doctor or the general practitioner. The typography is pleasing with clearly spaced sub-headings. Scattered throughout the book are *aide-*

memoire line drawings which augment the text.

Much of the book will already be known to the experienced doctor. The student and trainee will find it interesting and profitable reading; for this reason it is recommended for the teaching practice library.

I. D. KERR

A LABORATORY GUIDE TO CLINICAL DIAGNOSIS (4th EDITION)

R. D. Eastham (ed.)

Wright, Bristol (1976)

303 pages. Price £2.50

Ever since I met my petite wife I have been convinced that good things come in small packages. This compact cloth-bound guide confirms my belief.

However, the problem about pocket editions—and this one is no exception—is that they tend to be not quite small enough to fit unobtrusively into the pocket of the sartorially conscious general practitioner; but, to be fair, this little book would only gently distend the white coat of the hospital doctor.

The print, despite its small size, is clear and the layout attractive. Some sections are outstanding in their entirety, as shown by the single chapter on blood disorders and the first three on infectious diseases. Other subjects, such as poisoning, are less well covered. Hidden among some unexciting pages are a few gems of concentrated excellence, only a paragraph or two in length, for example the haematological, biochemical, and enzyme changes in myocardial infarction and in uraemia.

Although the guide will have a greater appeal to paediatric and medical senior house officers, perhaps if its next edition were to be produced in a larger size, it might find a place on the consulting room bookshelf, where it would be consulted occasionally but usefully.

SIMON JENKINS

BOOKS RECEIVED

Edinburgh and Medicine. Compiled by R. G. W. Anderson & A. D. C. Simpson. Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh (1976). 72 pages. Price £1.75.

The Early Years of the Edinburgh Medical School. Compiled by R. G. W. Anderson & A. D. C. Simpson. Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh (1976). 124 pages. Price £3.