

STATISTICS AT SQUARE ONE

T. D. V. Swinscow

*British Medical Association
London (1976)*

86 pages. Price £1.50

The subject of statistics has for a long time been the Achilles heel of research in general practice. This is hardly surprising, as it was not taught at all to many who are now principals in general practice, and even today the very suggestion of determining statistical significance sends shudders down the spines of many enthusiastic general-practitioner research workers.

Although there are several books written for non-mathematicians, there is little doubt that there is still a great gap and that doctors in particular can be helped by medically slanted examples.

The *British Medical Journal* is to be congratulated for producing its recent series on statistics, written by its Deputy Editor, Dr T. D. V. Swinscow, and for covering a good deal in a series of short and simply described steps. This book brings together the articles in this series in only 86 pages.

To some extent the choice of material must be a matter of taste, and personally I would have welcomed rather more on non-parametric tests, which seem to have particular value in many general-practice studies. Although there is a chapter on rank sum tests, which includes Wilcoxon's, somehow this book does not emphasize that non-parametric tests are not merely an alternative to parametric methods but may actually be superior when the measurement can be made only in nominal or ordinal scales, and when normal distribution cannot reasonably be assumed.

It is to be hoped that further developments in simple statistics will follow and that this book will be available widely in the libraries of postgraduate medical centres.

D. J. PEREIRA GRAY

COUNSELLING AND ADVISORY SERVICES—ENGLAND AND WALES, DIRECTORY (2nd EDITION)

*The Standing Conference of the Advancement of Counselling
26 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3HU (1976)*

55 pages. Price 75p
(90p including postage)

Every week one of the quality Sunday papers mentions an organization set up to help a group of people with a com-

mon handicap or problem. A mental note is made to record the name and address of the organization, in case it may be of use to a patient. In my case I rarely get further than the mental note.

However, the Standing Conference of the Advancement of Counselling has produced a booklet which lists about 25 such agencies. These range from Alcoholics Anonymous and the Family Planning Association to less well known groups such as Gingerbread or SPOD. The information given on each group or agency is brief. For instance, the function of the Committee on Sexual Problems of the Disabled is to "stimulate public and professional awareness, to establish a centre for the collection and dissemination of information, and to provide a referral service for clients and to arrange for the training and education for those who work amongst the disabled in the sexual aspects of disability". The first part of this book is a geographical directory to counselling agencies throughout the country. My own town is not mentioned, and under Sheffield—30 minutes away—four agencies are listed. One of these I have used before and found very helpful. I had not heard of the other three. One group is a counselling service for homosexuals and two are counselling services for young people—not information one needs every day, but if the need did arise this booklet would save valuable time searching for addresses or telephone numbers which have been hidden on different bits of paper.

At 75p I think this is a useful booklet to add to other reference books on the practice shelf.

M. F. HASENFUSS

ACCIDENTS AND EMERGENCIES

R. H. Hardy

Robert Dugdale, Oxford (1976)

62 pages. Price £1.50

This is an excellent book containing in its 60 pages the basic principles of the management of the majority of problems seen in an accident and emergency department.

The author, Dr R. H. Hardy, accepts the limitations of any textbook of accident and emergencies "because of the lack of any generally accepted practice in the field", especially in the field of orthopaedics, were there is a greater degree of personal variation. He has therefore compiled a handbook containing the framework upon which individual practitioners can build. To make this practicable each right-hand

page is left blank for the practitioner to add his own notes: "What will be really valuable is what is written on the right." The text is clear and concise and it is arranged alphabetically for quick and easy reference. There is also a comprehensive bibliography. It is a pity, however, that the print is so small.

I thought several sections were particularly useful, namely a tabulation of drugs commonly used in accident and emergency work, with their doses for both adults and children; a guide to which antibiotic to use in situations such as some head injuries, wounds, and abscesses, and when to use them; and the management of poisoning, particularly from corrosives and volatile hydrocarbons, with a guide on overcoming difficulties with more obscure poisoning.

Some of the opinions and guidance offered are "heterodox and sometimes frankly contentious in the hope that they stimulate radical rethinking of current practice". The treatment of all degrees of burns, when they first present, with 'Terra-cortril' spray may do just this, as may the liberal use of intramuscular antibiotics. The use of magnesium sulphate paste was notable for its absence, the treatment of abscesses being incision and drainage usually combined with systemic antibiotics. The author also condemns the use of antibiotic sprays in the management of wounds "as they fill the air with allergenic dust, and the department with multiresistant bacteria."

I found this a most instructive book and think it a necessary addition to any accident and emergency department for both medical and nursing staff. I rather doubt if general practitioners who do small amounts of this kind of work will find it of such great value, but I would strongly recommend it to all trainees in general practice.

C. O'CONNELL

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF: A CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO MEDICAL CARE

Donald M. Vickery
& James F. Fries

*Addison-Wesley
Reading, Massachusetts*

269 pages. Price \$5.95

It would be easy to approach this book with prejudice. The glossy cover, the concept of do-it-yourself medicine, expressions such as 'shot' for 'injection' and 'office' for 'surgery'—all these will be off-putting to the hardened NHS patient or doctor. He may shudder at the mention of computers in the first paragraph and wince when he hears that