

has no such warning and is overcome mentally in the proprioceptor senses because he experiences a hitherto unknown impediment from a healthy joint. According to this line of reasoning, the quadriceps wasting in a knee cartilage lesion is due to suppressor band cortical activity. Actual loss of quadriceps muscle substance by a fracture of femur causes no such type of

disability as that of a cartilage lesion.

Another consideration also comes into the picture. Anaesthetics probably act by depressing the reticular formation. This may have been the factor which brought good results in former times to the orthopaedic specialist who "manipulated the back to breakdown adhesions" or, in the case of the woman, an operation for retroverted

uterus to cure a painful back. May not the depressed reticular formation proprioceptor centre also be responsible for the almost miraculous escapes of alcoholics?

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BOOK REVIEWS

PAEDIATRIC CARE—CHILD HEALTH IN FAMILY PRACTICE

S. Carne
Medical and Technical,
Lancaster (1976)
259 pages. Price £6.50

By chance this book has appeared almost simultaneously with two others that are germane to its subject—the Report of the Committee on Child Health Services (Court Report), and White Franklin's *Widening Horizons of Child Health*. All three suggest, in very different ways, that we should take a fresh look at the care of children in general practice, and it is against this background that the book must be reviewed.

The basic thesis of the Court Report is that while the medical needs of children have changed, the scope and standard of care has not adapted adequately to meet the change. The problem is not primarily one of bad practice, but inadequate practice. "It is a matter of providing a service which sees the child as his parents see him, as a whole person whose life is a continuum rather than a series of segments . . ." (para. 5.10). Such a service must be family centred; readily accessible; integrated; and increasingly directed to prevention (para. 5.24); and the Report has no doubt whatever that such a service must be built on general practice in the form we know. Equally it has no doubt that "it is in the organization of first-contact services that significant changes are necessary to achieve a higher calibre of comprehensive primary child health care" (para. 7.6).

The priorities of such primary child health care must be decided on what is known of the incidence and prevalence of child health problems. In setting out to provide a picture of these problems, White Franklin's book starts from the premise that "If the function of paediatrics is to ensure the fullest possible development of the child . . . the paediatrics of sickness recedes from its

historic dominance, making room for the paediatrics of development, the paediatrics of education, the paediatrics of life and habit, psychopaediatrics, and the paediatrics of public health and prevention." It is these six facets of child care, he suggests, which should provide the bases both of service and of the doctor's education.

So Dr Carne's book arrives at a timely moment. Its aims are, he writes, "to cover aspects of child health which are the province of those involved in primary paediatric care, be they physicians or any other of the members of the community care team".

However, after an introductory chapter (with brief sections on history-taking and clinical examination), a chapter on growth and development, and one entitled "Some Problems of Infant Care", the main body of the book is devoted to a system by system account of some common diseases in children. This is then followed by a chapter on psychological disorders and a final chapter on "Battered Babies and Cot Deaths". The book thus follows the traditional design of many paediatric textbooks.

Such an approach necessarily presents the author with difficulties. To be useful to his readers, he must either set out to write a compendious work of reference—answering (in so far as present knowledge allows) important questions which an intelligent clinician may well wish to have answered; or he must settle for an anthology of substantiated observations. Otherwise he is in danger of becoming trite, or of making unsubstantiated *ex cathedra* statements.

Dr Carne is not entirely successful in avoiding both these dangers. Too often he is trite; for example, when writing of congenital heart disease (p. 199) he says: "Whether or not a lesion is amenable to surgery will depend on the findings of a specialist investigation." Of enuresis he says: "It is also not uncommon in British boarding schools" (p. 127); and, of battered babies: "We do know that it is most common in families who are poor physically, financially, intellectu-

ally, morally, or emotionally" (p. 248). Sometimes it is a matter of failing to distinguish between *post* and *propter*; for example, in the same chapter he writes: "In a proportion of cases, one or both parents is suffering from alcoholism, epilepsy or schizophrenia; and in an even greater proportion is a psychopath." On probability grounds this is a truism—just as true as a statement would be that in a proportion of cases one or both parents suffer from peptic ulcer.

Frequently, too, he falls into the error of making unsubstantiated statements. For example, in writing of chickenpox he states: "The virus remains dormant in a dorsal root ganglion where it may later be re-activated to produce an attack of herpes zoster" (p. 159).

Of meningitis he writes: "Clinical differentiation between meningitis and meningism is important," (although a few lines earlier he has correctly written (p. 165): "Diagnosis depends on the examination of the CSF"). This statement leads him to the highly controversial assertion that "if the child has tonsillitis with meningism hospitalization and lumbar puncture can both be avoided . . ."

Of asthma he says (p. 241): "The discovery of the immunoglobulins and the availability of better prophylactic (e.g. cromoglycate) and therapeutic agents have led most authorities to say that such emotional disturbances as are manifest in asthmatic children are due to organic disease and not the other way round."

Thus, in his self-imposed, restricted field of the "paediatrics of disease" the author is not always reliable. The reader, therefore, will wish from time to time to check the reliability of other statements. But since the book includes no list of selected references and sources, this is a tedious task.

What many readers will, I suspect, find sadder, is that at the very time when hospital specialists are making an imaginative and progressive approach to child care in the community, the

general practitioner should be seen to be preoccupied with organic disease in children to the exclusion of much else that is of major practical importance.

H. J. WRIGHT

References

- Court Committee on Child Health Services (1976). *Fit for the Future*. London: HMSO.
- White Franklin, A. (1976). *Widening Horizons of Child Health*. Lancaster: Medical and Technical Publishers.

THE ROLE OF MEDICINE. DREAM, MIRAGE OR NEMESIS

Thomas McKeown

Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust, London (1976)

80 pages. Price £3.25

I once had the pleasure of sitting next to Professor McKeown at dinner. We played a game in which I was invited to judge whether any given epigram was an original "McKeown" or emanated from some other distinguished source. I was not very good at it but am delighted to report that Professor McKeown has lost none of his skill in fashioning epigrams of which the following is an example: "Our habits begin as pleasures of which we have no need and end as necessities in which we have no pleasure."

The Role of Medicine, the happy result of a Rock Carling Fellowship, is in two parts. The first part restates the arguments which persuade Professor McKeown that the main determinants of the improvement in health in the western world have been nutritional, environmental, and behavioural, in that order, and that the contributions of preventive and curative medicine have been slight. In the second part he discusses the future role of medicine in the western world and suggests that the major determinants will be behavioural, environmental, and nutritional, in that order.

With the sole exception of epidemiology he sees the contribution of orthodox medicine as continuing to be important, particularly in respect of care and the quality of life, but making little impact on health. He renews his plea for a diminution of the distortions produced by teaching centres, and for the integration of psychiatric services, the care of the mentally handicapped, and the aged. This second part deserves wide readership and should stimulate an overdue reappraisal of the role of the general practitioner.

Professor McKeown's views have not hitherto received the attention they deserve from the profession as a whole, and his earlier design for primary care, based on some degree of specialization, has never received support. Nonetheless, his major thesis deserves critical and careful examination and this monograph should be widely read.

J. S. MC CORMICK

TRAINING FOR GENERAL PRACTICE IN 1976

Council for Postgraduate Medical Education in England & Wales

Available from 7 Marylebone Road, Park Crescent, London NW1 5HA

16 pages. Price 30p

The Council for Postgraduate Medical Education in England and Wales can be congratulated on producing a new up-to-date booklet on training for general practice in 1976.

With a record number of trainers already appointed, and with the number of trainees entering practice increasing all the time, there is a continual need for clear guidance for trainees whose careers are going to be affected, and for established principals who are interested in becoming trainers.

This little booklet brings together in only 16 pages much useful information and offers rather clearer guidance for the selection of teachers in general practice than has been available before.

In particular, it suggests that attendance at a course for trainers before appointment and a commitment to attend such courses regularly after appointment should be one criterion, and a "commitment to take part in ongoing local teachers' groups and courses recommended by the regional postgraduate committee" should be another.

Under the general heading of "Ability to Teach", "willingness to submit to assessment of ability as a teacher" and "awareness of the educational aims of vocational training for general practitioners" are two of the criteria given.

For the first time an experience factor of three years in general practice as a principal is laid down and the booklet ends with an interesting graph showing how the time spent between full registration and the date of becoming an unrestricted principal has changed considerably in the years 1969 to 1974.

D. J. PEREIRA GRAY

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Donald Hicks

HMSO, London (1976)

629 pages. Price £9.50

The author of this book is a chemical engineer and is a consultant to the Department of Health and Social Security on the application of operational research to Health Service problems. In 1973 he was commissioned to survey the literature of general practice with the object of promoting studies by operational researchers into primary medical care. Subsequently the DHSS decided to publish the review for a wider circulation, particularly for those who are, or will be, engaged in NHS administration.

Mr Hicks reviews and quotes extensively from over 400 books and papers. Much is largely of historical interest: for example, ten pages are devoted to a descriptive analysis of the First National Morbidity Survey, carried out over 20 years ago (although 18 pages are devoted to the second survey carried out in 1970/71).

There are chapters on the role of the general practitioner, the measurement of good and bad health, and the organization of primary health care. The most valuable part of the book for the research orientated general practitioner is a series of chapters describing, with extensive quotations, many of the morbidity surveys carried out, both by government departments and individuals, over the past 20 years. The author examines the role of health visitors (he seems doubtful of their necessity), home nurses, and social workers in general practice. Mental illness at the primary care level, and the health of the school child are dealt with in depth. Mr Hicks recognizes (and demonstrates) the difficulty the layman has in examining the literature of mental illness. As has happened elsewhere, the chapter on the "Health of the School Child" suffers from "waiting for Court".

Many of the papers are well known and it is unlikely that many general practitioners will want to purchase this book. However, as a guide to past publications relevant to many aspects of general practice, and particularly by virtue of its long quotations from published and unpublished government reports, it may have a place on the shelves of the local postgraduate library, where it is likely to be consulted more often than in the offices of the NHS administrators to whom it has been sent freely. Those wishing to refer to recently published work would be