

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.

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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