

Book Reviews

well advised to consider the series of bibliographies prepared by Miss Hammond, the college librarian, on "Research Projects by General Practitioners".

D. G. GARVIE

AN INTRODUCTION TO PRIMARY MEDICAL CARE

D. C. Morrell

Churchill Livingstone,
Edinburgh (1976)

138 pages. Price £1.95

In recent years the increase of academic departments of general practice has been matched by the increase in academic general-practice textbooks, so one sometimes doubts their relevance and usefulness to those engaged in general practice. Happily, when the book is by David Morrell, Wolfson Professor of General Practice, St Thomas' Hospital Medical School, such doubts soon disappear, for he has consistently used his experience to describe and illuminate the teaching points he makes.

In his view, training for primary medical care is now more of an academic discipline based on epidemiological investigation which uses the concept of probability as an essential working tool: basic individual experience alone is no longer enough. While he does not go as far as Sackett at McMaster University, for example, he uses continuing basic research into and about his practice for results which illustrate the special needs of trainees. Such needs include the basic one of promoting skills in communication, and learning and using special skills developed by the general practitioner in examination, diagnosis, and prognosis. The short chapter on treatment points out good working principles.

Morrell's phrasing is clear, concise, and a pleasure to read. For example, "... rarely can an illness be regarded as a clear-cut entity . . . it is a deviation from the normal produced by a number of factors acting over a period of time and with implications which reach outside the individual concerned." The book is well produced and easy to read; tables are clear and explicit, as are the illustrative individual case notes. Yet conciseness has its disadvantages: "excessive nutrition" (page 86) and "many people who died in youth or early adult life now go on to old age" (page 125) both need rephrasing. Surprisingly no mention is made of the value of the radiologist in domiciliary consultation after describing the value of the pathologist: is this a reflection of Morrell's

own experience?

The book is stimulating and is full of interest. Undergraduates faced with the mysteries of general practice will find practical help in it. Postgraduate trainees, for whom it is intended, will rarely invest their money more wisely; and experienced general practitioners, especially trainers, might well follow their example with similar advantage.

TEVIOT EIMERL

A SHORT TEXTBOOK OF PSYCHIATRY. 2ND EDITION

W. L. Linford Rees

Hodder and Stoughton Unibooks,
London (1976)

332 pages. Price £2.26

Professor Linford Rees's book is not a general practitioner's guide to practical psychiatry in the consulting room, nor to the doctor/patient relationship. He presents a cross-sectional view of selected psychiatric disorders with little emphasis on the longitudinal aspects of disease.

The first 93 pages are devoted to behavioural science. Psychology and the theories of intelligence, learning, personality, and perception are covered in a necessarily brief but unfortunately disconnected way. The differing schools of psychological thinking are there but in a most confusing mixture. The briefness of the text leads to oversimplification and sometimes loss of meaning.

On the credit side, the second part of the book, which deals with psychiatry, covers all aspects from the psychiatric examination of the patient through schizophrenia, sexual disorders, and child psychiatry to behaviour therapy and psychopharmacology. One of the stated aims is to include every aspect but this is for the sake of completeness and does not give a rounded view of the aspects of disease that are covered.

While the index is poor, the suggested references at the end of each chapter are helpful. They include readable Penguin paperbacks as well as more standard textbooks and thus provide a sound source for further reading.

The book itself probably does achieve one of its stated aims, which is to review the phenomena of psychiatric illness and the present state of knowledge about their aetiology. It may therefore be a useful book to read in order to pass an examination. However, it did not convey to me much feeling for the subject and thus falls short of the expectation that it should excite the reader's interest and convey the

author's enthusiasm for his subject.

The new sections in this second edition include one on psychiatric emergencies. Several chapters of the first edition have been updated.

M. J. Y. FISHER

DISPUTATION CONCERNING THE MOVEMENT OF THE HEART AND BLOOD IN LIVING CREATURES

William Harvey. Translated by
Gweneth Whitteridge

Blackwell Scientific,
London (1977)

142 pages. Price £4.75 (paperback)

Medical historians, logicians, and Latinists will study this new translation of Harvey's *De Motu Cordis* with considerable reward, but it is doubtful whether any doctor without any interest in at least one of these subjects will really want to know.

Had Harvey done his work in the 20th century, he would have condensed the whole into a paper of some 2,000 words, found an obliging editor, and that would have been that. Not so, however, in the 17th century. The only accepted method then was the disputation, conducted strictly according to the laws of logic and argument, with the whole subject teased out to the last strand—and in Latin. Aunt Sallys were put up only to be shied down; hypotheses abounded and suffered the same fate; earlier authorities were quoted with almost sycophantic respect and then politely but remorselessly clobbered until only the disputant's theory remained standing. A cumbersome method, but the literature is much enriched thereby.

In a long and scholarly introduction the author leads the amateur kindly and firmly through the academic groves in which she is clearly so much at home, pointing out such objects of interest as the difference between the pluperfect subjunctive and the pluperfect indicative, and the many possible translations of the word *nervus*. All good clean academic fun, but one must have retained at least some shreds of Latinity to be able to join in.

This work should be in every medical library as a reference book, for it will almost certainly supersede its predecessors as the standard work. The author's introduction is enlightening and the text is well annotated, and as a work of reference its price is by no means out of the way; but I think its popular appeal will be small.

JOHN MILES