

**POSTGRADUATE MEDICINE**

I. J. T. Davies

Lloyd Luke, London (1977)

467 pages. Price £8

My apprehension on being asked to review a third edition of a textbook of medicine was considerable, for the very fact that the book has reached a third edition within eight years means that the demand for this type of book must be considerable.

To my surprise I enjoyed reading this book and learnt a lot from it. It is literally crammed full of facts and hints on how to assess medical situations. Dr Davies states in his introduction that it should be of value to an increasing number of candidates for the MRCP, at whom it is primarily aimed, as well as for vocational trainees during their period of hospital medicine. It is not intended to encompass the whole of medicine but covers most of the major medical topics.

There are detailed descriptions of the treatment of severe shock, forced diuresis in the case of salicylate overdoses, and a number of other specifically hospital topics, but mainly the book covers topics which are of considerable relevance to general practitioners. The sections on managing abdominal pain and sorting out hypercalcaemia come to mind as being particularly useful.

It is a pity that, having avoided in the treatment sections all mention of clinics in the management of diabetes and thyroid disorders, the author suggests yearly check-ups at postgastrectomy clinics. Surely this is a task for the general practitioner? I was surprised too, at the mention of practolol usage on p. 60 and the statement that diazoxide is only occasionally used in the treatment of malignant hypertension.

The author's use of footnotes to identify the eponyms so often used in medicine and his well chosen references complement this extremely valuable book. Reading it has proved a most useful postgraduate exercise.

M. J. WHITFIELD

**EMERGENCIES IN MEDICAL PRACTICE**

C. A. Birch (ed.)

Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh (1976)

864 pages. Price £15

A tenth edition is no mean achievement. Dr Birch's book has been available for nearly 20 years, but by frequent revision and judicious changes of contributors

(12 new ones for this edition) it has been more than adequately kept up to date. The presentation is much improved, although the binding was loose on my review copy. Use of better quality paper has resulted in a considerable weight reduction, although the number of pages remains substantially the same.

The more unusual chapters on drug dependence, radiation, maritime, and aeronautical problems are interesting bronchodilators are surely more effective there is a wealth of detail for reference on the treatment of all the more conventional medical emergencies, although much of the material is necessarily more applicable to the hospital doctor than the general practitioner.

There are some small sections which still need revision: the use of atropine in bradycardias, and surely the new beta-blockers have superseded verapamil? Too many duplicated drugs are listed for an emergency bag, and the newer bronchodilators are surely more effective and safer by injection than aminophylline? (Adrenaline has been removed altogether.)

The only completely new chapter is on geriatric emergencies, but unfortunately it avoids what is probably the only urgent problem: what to do with an elderly patient when the geriatrician, or often the psychiatrist, cannot or will not co-operate in arranging admission.

There is an excellent section on practice procedures, including not only all the things one expects, such as tracheostomy and intravenous infusion, but also such bizarre items as embalming (if you happen to have ten litres of formalin in your emergency bag).

The book ends with 66 pages listing organizations and services for everything from haemodialysis to hyperbaric oxygen, and from haemophilia to helicopter rescue.

This is a valuable book for the general practitioner's library, but regrettably at £15 it is grossly overpriced.

PATRICK HOYTE

**PROFILES OF CLINICAL PRACTICE**

K. S. Sanjivi

Orient Longman, Madras, India (1976)

363 pages. Price Rs 17 (£1.15)

Publishers of medical textbooks in India suffer the disadvantage of having to use inferior paper for them. This affects the quality of the photographic reproductions but should not detract the serious reader from appreciating the quality of the text.

*Profiles of Clinical Practice* is written ostensibly for general practitioners but rather unfortunately, perhaps, not by a general practitioner. In the section on pyrexias of undetermined origin, (PUOs), for example, the general practitioner is asked not to treat patients with such fevers with anything else but a placebo for the first 72 hours. Unless the patient happens to be a "captive client" in the ward, most general practitioners will realize the practical difficulty of not even giving an aspirin to a patient whose fever has been raging continuously for three days.

The sections on diseases of the chest are well written, the author apparently having much interest and experience in this field. Eosinophilic disease of the lung is discussed and it is interesting in that it apparently affects only the South Indians and not the other races in tropical Asia. It may be pertinent to ask, however, whether it was necessary to devote so much space to congenital cystic disease of the bronchi, or to Meigs's syndrome in a book for general practitioners.

The author hopes to edit a second volume of clinical profiles where neurological, kidney, and other diseases omitted from this volume would be dealt with.

In the chapters dealing with hypertension and coronary heart disease it would be wise to update the information on the beta-adrenergic blockers, especially now that practolol ('Eraldin') is no longer in favour.

For general practitioners practising in rural parts of India or South East Asia this book provides a useful refresher course on tropical medicine.

E. K. KOH  
Singapore

**ESSENTIALS OF FAMILY PLANNING**

Josephine Barnes

Blackwell Scientific, London (1976)

132 pages. Price £2.50

Within its small compass, Josephine Barnes's excellent book covers not only the entire field of family planning as practised currently in this country, but also other subjects as well. There are chapters on the philosophy of family planning which begin with a historical review of the subject, on counselling, on sexually transmitted diseases and, finally, a splendid account of the difficulties which may be met in practice.

It is an inevitable failing of books in this series that they read like a précis. Condensation spoils literary style and readability and this account of modern