

## 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

family planning is no exception. It is more a book for the medical student or examinee than for the average general practitioner.

The chapter on the Pill deals at length with the many pills available, but fails to draw attention to the very real advantages of the low oestrogen pills, which are, or should be, cornering the market. Also, in this chapter there is vague advice on the subject of the two-yearly break, which some doctors still advocate. The reviewer was most interested in the repeated suggestion that pyridoxine might be the answer to some patients' problems of lassitude and depression.

The chapter on IUDs is a model of its kind: there is an excellent account of how to insert one, including the often omitted advice to use a vusellum to steady and straighten the canal. Few doctors today, however, ask their patients or their husbands or boy friends to sign consent forms when fitting IUDs.

Because family planning is a rapidly changing subject it is difficult for such a book to be up to date. Already there are more new contraceptive pills on the market. The 'Progestasert' has arrived on the IUD scene and the 'Dalkon' shield has been completely withdrawn. With these exceptions, however, all the latest information is gathered together and well presented.

In general, this is an excellent, up-to-date account of family planning, although this particular reviewer would prefer a little more meat in his diet.

J. K. LLOYD

## HYPERTENSION AND STROKE CONTROL IN THE COMMUNITY

S. Hatano, I. Shigematsu & T. Strasser

WHO, Geneva (1976)

Swiss francs 30, US \$12, £6.90

This is a report of a WHO meeting in Tokyo in 1974, attended by 58 delegates, two thirds of them Japanese. One delegate worked in a health centre and four in industrial medical services providing some primary care. All the rest were hospital specialists, epidemiologists, or full-time researchers.

Japan has an incidence of stroke roughly double that in Britain and the

USA and four times that of Sweden. It starts much younger: Japanese men have the same incidence of stroke at 40 as the British do at 75. Although hypertension is closely (and causally) related to haemorrhagic stroke, and rather less so to atherothrombotic stroke, there is no evidence that the Japanese have higher average arterial pressures, or more people with high pressures, than we do. Clearly there are other factors involved, which are ultimately social, though probably concerned with diet. As in all countries with rising standards of living, the incidence of stroke in Japan is falling, and is higher in the poor than in the well-to-do (there is a large social class gradient in the same direction in Britain, little studied and wholly unexplained). Japan shows much higher rates in the countryside than in the towns, which is interesting, since average serum cholesterol levels are lower in country-dwellers. For those interested in these fundamental questions, this book brings together a good deal of international evidence, although there are no startling developments. The review by J. Richard is particularly helpful.

As might be expected from the composition of the conference, little was said about the practical means of putting its conclusions into effect. There is one good paper that discusses delivery and compliance problems seriously in a genuine community context, and the author shows real evidence of an effort to tackle them and measure the results. However, it appears to have led to little discussion.

Perhaps the next WHO conference on hypertension control will put an end to interminable lip-service to the importance of primary care, and give it some serious representation. Until that happens, we shall continue to accumulate and learnedly discuss knowledge that is not applied. There is little evidence here that such a dawn is either anticipated or desired.

JULIAN TUDOR HART

## PROBLEMS OF CHILDHOOD

S. Lock (ed.)

British Medical Association, London (1976)

149 pages. Price £2.50, US \$6.25

This is a small book published by the

British Medical Association from a collection of articles which appeared in the *British Medical Journal* early in 1976. The essays cover a wide range of problems including acute and physical disorders of childhood as well as psychological and behavioural problems. The subject matter ranges from constipation to squints and for the most part the essays are clearly written and logically presented.

In some ways, the beginning of the book is more rewarding than its later chapters because of a very good introductory chapter by Roy Meadow of Leeds, called "Consultation, Diagnosis and Management". This gives several practical tips for managing the young patient, followed by a reasonable and sensible review by D. P. Addy of Birmingham, of what can be an emotive subject—infant feeding. Paediatricians from Bristol and Birmingham follow with a good article on bottle feeding. Two other outstanding articles are: "Febrile Fits", by Sheila Wallace of Cardiff, and "Squints" by Brian Harcourt of Leeds.

Of course one can carp. The article on wheezy children by J. K. Sarsfield of Harrogate is the one most likely to upset the general practitioner. It states that asthma is the most common cause of wheezing and quotes in evidence the article which appeared in the *British Medical Journal* in 1969 by H. Williams and K. McNicol from Australia. In this follow-up of wheezy children the first year of life was not included, so that their evidence is in direct contradistinction to Fry's statement that, in his experience, only 7.7 per cent of wheezy babies go on to become asthmatics. Family doctors will know which is the more likely statement. It is also asserted that most asthmatic children have demonstrable allergies. While this may be true of hospital practice it is unlikely to be the case in community paediatrics. In the paper on disorders of micturition, Roy Meadow seems unaware that most general practitioners have direct access to IVPs and other investigations without having recourse to the paediatrician.

This is a book which is not expensive and on the whole represents value for money in that current thinking on a variety of paediatric problems is lucidly presented. As a paperback it is unlikely to be available in medical libraries and will need to be bought.

MARGARET POLLAK