

code represent commonly used 'packages' of examinations which, if undertaken, can conveniently be recorded by the code. At any time, examinations infrequently used can be recorded individually.

Some practices, I am sure, already have their own coding system. Perhaps the College might develop a system for potential national use?

P. S. BYRNE
Professor

Department of General Practice
University of Manchester
Darbshire House Health Centre
Upper Brook Street
Manchester M13 0FW.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF DISTRICT NURSES

Sir,
In November 1976 the Panel of Assessors published their *Report on the Education and Training of District Nurses (SRN/RGN)*. The report, with a summary of the comments received from health authorities and other organizations, is under consideration by the Health Departments.

One of the recommendations was that there was a need for a working party to be established to consider the education and training of the enrolled district nurse. This has been accepted by the Health Departments and the panel have now set up a working party to advise them within the following terms of ref-

erence: "To devise an improved syllabus or curriculum for the district training of the enrolled nurse without prejudice to the implementation of the Briggs Report on Nursing".

The working party would be pleased to receive comments from readers on the role and training of the enrolled district nurse. They should bear in mind the recommended curriculums for the registered nurse. Comments should be sent in writing to me at the address below as soon as possible.

T. W. MATTHEWS
Secretary
Panel of Assessors for District
Nurse Training

Hannibal House
Elephant and Castle
London SE1 6TE.

BOOK REVIEWS

TRENDS IN GENERAL PRACTICE 1977

Royal College of General Practitioners
J. Fry (ed.)

British Medical Journal
London (1977)

193 pages. Price £4.50

A sense of history is as important to medicine as it is to politics and this book would be worth buying and reading for its first chapter alone. This is a brief historical review, written by Dr Loudon, of the relationship between general and hospital practice; and its importance lies simply in the fact that the so much needed clinical reunification of the profession is unlikely to be achieved until the historical roots of present divisions are understood.

The book itself is a descendant of previous *Reports from General Practice* published by the *Journal* in 1965, 1970, and 1973, under the title of *Present State and Future Needs of General Practice*. These were written by Dr Fry who edits and contributes to the present volume. The aim of the book is "to describe developments up to the present date and to propound the views of the

authors on their significance."

Altogether, 11 authors contribute. After Dr Loudon's historical review, Dr Fry writes on "The Place of Primary Care", and Dr Howie on "Patterns of Work". These are followed by six contributions from different authors on various aspects of practice: "The content of Practice", "Child care", "The Elderly", "Obstetrics", "Fertility and Family Medicine", and "Induced Abortion". Later chapters are devoted to organizational issues ("The Practitioner and the Hospital", "The Health Team", "Premises and Organization"). Finally, there are chapters on "Prescribing" and "Education for General Practice", followed by an epilogue on "Future Needs".

After reading many of the chapters, the reader may well feel that the book would have been better entitled 'Trends in the Background to General Practice', since it provides much more factual information about demographic and social changes that have (or should have) a direct impact on general practice than about adaptive changes in practice itself. In this respect, Dr McEwan's contribution on "Fertility and Family Medicine" and Dr Frank's review of "Induced Abortion" are outstanding—both clearly highlighting the complex social trends which general practice must face.

Inevitably and valuably the approach of the authors to their allotted subjects varies widely. For example, Dr Howie's contribution on "Patterns of Work" is a scholarly comprehensive review of 50 original papers, while Dr Lloyd's section on "Obstetrics" ingeniously juxtaposes statistical material on recent trends in the maternity services. However, the material also varies in standard—and of two sections dealing with subjects of considerable clinical importance, one is frankly inadequate, and the other confused and partisan.

Perhaps, however, the book's most serious defect is its failure (with some honourable exceptions) to crystallize the adaptative changes which demographic and social trends demand of general practice. These could valuably have been highlighted at the end of each chapter. It is unfortunate that the book finishes with a platitudinous epilogue—particularly when the question is currently being asked: "Is the general practitioner—compared with other alternative forms of primary medical care—worth his salt?"

Nevertheless, this is a book worth buying and reading by trainees and principals alike. The reader may be irritated by the too numerous typographical errors, but there is plenty of useful material between its covers.

H. J. WRIGHT