

Dr Jean McIntosh and Professor Ian Richardson.

An observer with a stop-watch and a check-list accompanied 30 community nurses on 1,961 home visits and 168 patient contacts in the surgery. She analysed the time taken and content of each consultation and procedure.

The results are fascinating: from Table 1 which shows that of the 24.7 minutes taken by an 'average' visit, only 8.4 minutes are occupied by nursing care, to the discussion of the topics of conversation between patient and nurse.

For most general practitioners this study will be illuminating and will broaden their view of the capabilities of their attached nurses. For nursing officers and administrators it should be required reading.

R. V. H. JONES

### RESIDENTIAL HOMES FOR THE ELDERLY. ARRANGEMENTS FOR HEALTH CARE

*Department of Health and Social Security, London (1977)*

18 pages

Care of the elderly in residential homes is one of the 'grey areas' in the provision of services. Many general practitioners would agree that there is a greater degree of dependence and frailty in present-day residents than there was ten years ago. This may be due to the increasing number of frail old people in the community whose admission to residential accommodation receives priority over social admissions of their more fit contemporaries, but it is more likely to be due to the pressure on hospital beds forcing dependent patients back into residential homes when a few years ago they would have been kept in hospital.

The memorandum defines the care provided in residential homes as that which might be provided by a competent and caring relative, but of course in many homes it is a great deal more than that. It stresses the importance of encouraging independence and activity. This is perhaps the most important statement in the booklet because too often dependence is created in the residents.

There will be general agreement about the policy statement on the freedom of

choice of doctor, although there are advantages in having a doctor who is interested in geriatric medicine in charge of care. The section on consultations and records stresses the need to keep careful records, which is important when more than one person is involved in care.

The problems of incontinence are dealt with in a practical way. The problems of the mentally infirm, however, are given only a brief mention, despite the fact that dementia can be most disruptive in an establishment. No attempt is made to discuss whether there should be separate homes for the mentally infirm, nor is there any discussion of whether there should be segregation, especially at meal times, of a demented resident with unacceptable social habits.

The thorny subject of transfer between hospital and residential homes is discussed in a sensible way, although not enough importance is given to the crucial role of the geriatrician in these exchanges.

The annex on custody and administration of medicines is detailed and practical.

The memorandum is written in a clear, direct style, although a predilection for the use of abbreviations gives it the flavour of officialdom. It can be recommended as a brief but useful guide to care in residential homes.

AUSTEN ELLIOTT

### BREAST FEEDING

*Department of Health and Social Security*

*Newman Scientific, London (1976)*  
280 pages

The campaigning zeal of the breast-feeding lobby almost surpasses that of the antismoking lobby. No doubt its protagonists believe that their cause should have almost as few exceptions as that of the nicotine knockers.

A one-day conference on breast feeding was organized in London in July 1975 by the Department of Health and Social Security, following its publication the year before of the report *Present Day Practice in Infant Feeding*. The papers given, plus two others to round off the subject, are now published in booklet form as a symposium

issue of the *Journal of Human Nutrition*. In 58 pages the subject is dealt with by 13 contributions from as many different points of view, ranging from physiological, through social, practical, educational, and experimental.

Most of the papers are of interest to the family doctor. I would commend particularly the one by Elizabeth Tylden on "Psychological and Social Considerations". She dispels a number of myths such as that breast feeding will spoil the figure and that breast feeding is instinctive. The corollary of this is that doctors and midwives need much more education about this topic. Dr Tylden also stresses the potentially damaging effects of separation of mother and baby in the first few hours after birth. Dr Lotte Newman's paper on "Breast Feeding as seen in General Medical Practice" is also of value for its pragmatic and imaginative approach.

Inevitably with so many contributors from different disciplines the same message is sometimes repeated. However, the value of the collection is enhanced by this wide variety of contributors. Arguments in favour of breast feeding are deployed from many different angles and are set alongside the reasons, some logical some emotional, why such arguments may be rejected. Whilst it would not be true to say that no general practitioner's library could be complete without it, this booklet deserves much more than a cursory glance.

ROLAND FREEDMAN

### ACUPUNCTURE THERAPY: CURRENT CHINESE PRACTICE

*Leong T. Tan, Margaret Y. C. Tan and Ilza Veith*

*Routledge and Kegan Paul, London (1975)*

159 pages. Price £5

This is not the place, nor does this book provide the opportunity, to discuss what most people still want to know, namely whether acupuncture works. Most of the book consists of detailed instructions on the use of acupuncture for a wide variety of diseases, from malaria to deaf-mutism. A good deal of Chinese is used (with translation) and there is a small bibliography and index.

S. L. BARLEY