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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### LET'S HELP OUR CHILDREN TALK

Miriam Gallagher

O'Brien Press, Dublin (1977)

154 pages. Price £4

Miriam Gallagher is a teacher of English who is also a speech therapist and a past chairman of the Irish Association of Speech Therapists. She has had considerable experience in teaching English and in undertaking speech therapy with children in schools, clinics, hospitals and special schools. She is therefore well qualified to write this book which is intended for parents and teachers and is therefore couched in suitably non-technical language. For the parent who is worried about the language development of his child, or the parents and teachers of a child with an established handicap or abnormal speech, this may prove to be a very practical guide both to what parents can do themselves to help and to what the professionals are attempting. It should never be forgotten that the pre-school child's very best teachers are his parents, so their help and co-operation must always be gained. The book contains an excellent summary of helpful books and useful addresses. Each chapter ends with pleasant illustrations by Pat Walsh and a summary in the form of guidelines.

There are one or two corrections needed, mostly in Mrs Gallagher's interpretation of the speech therapist's role. For example, parents are urged to seek speech therapy advice with their problems and worries. In order to reach full diagnosis before treatment a team approach, with a paediatrician as leader of the team, would be more appropriate. One cannot agree that it should be possible by developmental surveillance at six months of age to discover all developmental problems, or that parents whose child "is not speaking clearly by the time he starts school, (should) contact his teacher." It is greatly to be hoped that parents will have been concerned enough to seek help long before this age. The need for frequent testing of hearing as well as speech in children with cleft palates might also have been mentioned because of their often associated deafness. I do not agree that children with speech delay are necessarily helped by attending playgroups and nurseries. Most children learn their initial language

from grown-ups rather than peers so that the degree of language delay is surely highly relevant as to whether they need specialist help or nursery experience.

However, this book contains much practical advice for parents and teachers and could well be recommended by family doctors to parents after their child's problem has been diagnosed, to borrow from their local libraries.

MARGARET POLLAK

### LECTURE NOTES ON GERIATRICS

Nicholas Coni, William Davison and Stephen Webster

Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford (1977)

332 pages. Price £6.75

The Court Committee Report on child health services holds the limelight at the moment, but there is a much more serious challenge to the resources of the NHS. In stark contrast to the decline in the birthrate there is an explosive increase in the number of over-65s. However, even more important is the increase in the highly dependent over-75s, which is estimated to be 40 per cent by the year 2001. In this group nearly three quarters are classed as being severely handicapped. The implications for general practice are enormous. Yet at present only 15 per cent of vocational training schemes include a hospital post in geriatric medicine.

*Lecture Notes on Geriatrics* will help to plug the gap in the education of many general practitioners. It approaches the subject in a practical way. The first chapter, which describes the aims of geriatric medicine, sets the tone of the book. The emphasis is on fostering independence in the elderly and adopting a holistic approach. The chapter on deprivation is of particular interest, since it contains a section on the provision of extra financial benefits which is an important though often neglected subject. The organization of care is described with a slight bias towards the hospital. Future editions would be strengthened by the inclusion of more detail of the work of the

primary care team. The clinical chapters contain a great deal of information in compact form, including several useful management strategies. The positive attitude to treatment, with the dangers of iatrogenic disease being properly emphasized, is refreshing.

The book is clearly written and explicit. The tables, diagrams, and often amusing cartoons add to the clarity of the text. A list of further reading at the end of each chapter would be a useful addition to an excellent book. It can be unreservedly recommended to general practitioners who wish to update their knowledge of geriatric medicine.

AUSTEN ELLIOTT

### EVIDENCE OF THE CONSERVATIVE MEDICAL SOCIETY TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

Conservative Central Office  
London (1976)

13 pages. No price given

The Conservative Medical Society seeks to advise the Conservative Party on health matters and has now published its evidence to the Royal Commission on the NHS. It considers that a health corporation should be rejected and recommends the abolition of one of the tiers of the reorganized NHS. It believes that there should be a separate department of health with its own minister of cabinet rank and recommends that health authorities should have discretion to carry a greater percentage of capital and revenue funds forward from one year to the next.

The Society recommends earmarked income for Health Service expenditure which would include all income from prescriptions and other charges and all taxation revenue from alcohol and tobacco.

The Conservative Medical Society is concerned that "adequate health care shall continue to be available to all, whatever their means. We support a National Health Service." However, the Society envisages a redirection of the financing of the Health Service with a proportion of the finance coming direct