

College of Surgeons, and the years he spent with other important bodies including the General Medical Council and the Medical Research Council. There are chapters on his army life during the Second World War, his literary interests, and his library. He plays down his ultimate, immense personal success which culminated in his being elected President of the Royal College of Surgeons and, a year later, President of the Royal Society of Medicine. He was appointed KBE in 1967 and over the years has been given many honorary degrees and fellowships.

His love for both of his parents, for his wife, Judy, and for his two boys, is made quite clear. His father was also a remarkable man. He obtained his FRCS diploma at Guy's but decided to enter general practice and in a few years became personal medical adviser to Sir John French (Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force—"The First Hundred Thousand") with whom he went to France. A short while later he became Physician-in-Ordinary to the Duke of Connaught. By then he had been appointed KCMG and KCVO. Thus Hedley was brought up in a house from which a successful general practice was being run, which had on its list many distinguished patients and visitors.

He tells us a little about all of these things, about Rugby School in his day, how much he enjoyed himself at Trinity College, Oxford, obtaining first class honours in physiology, and about the close friendships he made with C. M. Hinshelwood and many others.

A scholarship to Guy's led to similar successes there, with appointment to the surgical staff and the formation of the Breast Unit which he started by himself in a small way. It has since been attended by about 20,000 patients!

There is a splendid chapter on what he believes should be the attributes and philosophy of a good surgeon, and on how the techniques of surgery and the atmosphere in operation theatres have changed during the past 40 years.

The chapters on his travels and recreations make excellent reading, especially his rugby football experiences, starting with the famous "Kittermaster's Try" (which he saw at Twickenham with his father), followed by his own games for the Oxford Greyhounds (equivalent to the University 2nd XV), the Harlequins, and for Middlesex. For those interested in sailing, his many adventures along the east and south coasts of England with his wife and children are excitingly recalled.

His passing comments on the NHS, on distinction awards, private practice, and politics (he has voted for all three major political parties in his time!), as

well as on recreation, retirement, and experiments on animals, are all interesting and full of wisdom.

This excellent and amusing autobiography should be read not only by every medical student and house officer who aspires to be a surgeon, but also by physicians, general practitioners, and others who work closely with their surgical colleagues. I am sure that they will all enjoy it and benefit from it.

LORD HUNT OF FAWLEY

### THE MEDICAL ANNUAL 1977/78: THE YEAR-BOOK OF TREATMENT

*Sir Ronald Bodley Scott and  
Sir James Fraser (Eds.)*

*John Wright and Sons  
Bristol (1977)*

*381 pages. Price £11*

The continuing education of general practitioners is more a personal problem than the responsibility of any outside agency. It is best achieved by taking advantage of every learning opportunity, whether by attendance at courses or lectures, or by taking advice from specialists, or by reading.

Reading, although a pleasure to some and a chore to many, is a necessary part of professional life and for the last 95 years the *Medical Annual* has provided a valuable opportunity for education.

This year there are special articles on joint infections and on riot control agents. The former is of particular value to general practitioners and the latter is of topical and practical interest to those working in areas of potential disquiet.

The editors have done their work well and maintained the high standard we have come to expect. General practitioners will find much to interest them, especially the chapters "The Diagnosis of the Acute Abdomen", by Sir James Fraser, "Coronary Disease", by Peter Carson and David Oakley, "Idiopathic Facial (Bell's) Palsy", by John Groves, "Cryptorchidism", by Dr Burke, and "The Current State of Hypertension", by Dr Havard. Professor J. D. E. Knox contributes an interesting chapter on general practice. To refer to these does not detract from the remainder, all of which can be read with advantage. Even ascorbic acid for the common cold finds a mention; there may be something in it after all!

To some the price of this book may be detrimental. Few journals can be obtained for a smaller annual outlay and here we have a distillate of all the leading journals. Year by year it becomes an encyclopaedia as well as a review.

H. W. K. ACHESON

### DIRECTORY OF POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL CENTRES

*Council for Postgraduate Medical  
Education in England and Wales*

*London (1978)*

*76 pages. Price £2*

The latest booklet listing details of all the postgraduate medical centres in the UK was produced with commendable promptness in January. This is the fourth directory of its kind and the best so far. More trouble seems to have been taken in collecting names, the layout is clearer, and it will continue to be a most useful reference booklet, precisely meeting its purpose. Apart from the curious custom of listing in several regions the consultants with their qualifications in full and the general practitioners without, there are few complaints, and the Council can be congratulated on a most useful publication.

D. J. PEREIRA GRAY

### ABORTION

*Malcolm Potts, Peter Diggory  
and John Peel*

*Cambridge University Press  
Cambridge and London (1977)*

*575 pages. Price £17.95 (hardback)  
£5.95 (paperback)*

According to my dictionary propaganda arose in 1622 when a congregation of the Roman Catholic Church were charged with the spreading of Catholicism. (It is ironic that the techniques developed for this purpose have been used so often since then with force and sincerity against the doctrines of that Church.) The facts, the arguments, and the tone deployed by the authors of *Abortion* are unquestionably propaganda; they see dangers to individuals (both born and unborn) and to society as a whole, and have collected massive evidence to counter these dangers. They have taken both a global view travelling in person between Afghanistan and Yugoslavia, and a conceptual view covering abnormalities of fetal development to the demographic consequences of liberal abortion laws. They have indexed items from Algeria to Zambia and massively buttressed their argument by references: one chapter has a mere 21 references, but another, "The Epidemiology of Induced Abortion," no less than 194. All this effort is devoted to, as the blurb says, "documenting changes, discussing logistics of abortion services and their role in family planning . . . making predictions." It sees abortion as "a key factor in the history of the past

century, and likely to become even more important."

A definitive text has certainly been attempted and any medical library would be poorer without this book. It is well written, contains many moving personal accounts, and uses great narrative skill to link diverse experiences from different times and places. I was nevertheless left with discomfort—perhaps they try too hard. Many reasons may be offered, but mine are as follows: the dangers to society which the authors see from over population, damage to unwanted children, and restriction of women's freedom must be refuted, and therefore facts are assembled from which the refutation should follow logically; unfortunately, the opposing view (that life is sacrosanct from conception) is not refuted when the disadvantages of a very restrictive abortion policy are pointed out. Therefore the authors give double the number of facts that are needed in the hope that the opposing edifice will tumble eventually through sheer weight.

I see no likelihood that the unborn child will cease to be protected in the foreseeable future, whether by societies which exist for that purpose, or by the attitudes of millions of women throughout the world. In other words, I judge this book as a failure in propaganda terms, but a mine of information. It may be merely unfortunate that as you, Mr Editor, and I both served as general practitioners on the Lane Committee, one such nugget suggested, by referring to "a general practitioner" (p. 314), that either you, Sir, or I, do not exist!

D. G. WILSON

**Reference**

Committee on the Working of the Abortion Act (1974). Chairman, Hon. Mrs Justice Lane. Report. London: HMSO.

**CORONARY CARE IN THE COMMUNITY**

Aubrey Colling (ed.)

Croom Helm, London (1977)  
226 pages. Price £12.95

The debate on the best place to manage myocardial infarction continues fitfully and sporadically but few now believe that a clear consensus will emerge. This account of the proceedings of a National Workshop held in Teesside in 1976 adds little that is new, and the original work that is referred to has been published elsewhere.

It is divided into four sections: community care, giving coronary care, guidelines for general practitioners, and

rehabilitation and prevention in general practice. Despite the editor's intention to avoid repetition, a statement about the natural history of myocardial infarction precedes almost every section.

The quality of the sections is as variable as one would expect. Professor R. M. Acheson's thoughtful review and Dr Jennifer Adgey's account of pre-hospital care are both readable and enjoyable. The section on prevention, which the editor admits he found difficult, is idiosyncratic and strange.

Reviewing this book gives me another opportunity to protest about the phrase *acute* myocardial infarction. Please, what is a *chronic* infarct?

There are one or two surprising statements, for example, Mackenzie is alleged to have recognized very few cases. While it is true that he did not completely understand the process, anyone reading his work soon realizes that he saw a large number of infarcts. The recommendations of the Working Party on the Prevention of Coronary Heart Disease of the Royal College of Physicians and the British Cardiac Society (1976) are misinterpreted in respect of the role of the general practitioner in identifying those at risk. The thesis of the working party was that the general practitioner, because he saw almost all of his patients over a period of years, could theoretically identify those at risk without the need for 'screening' by nurses or other agencies.

Figure 1, based on the Teesside Survey, shows the effect of age on place of treatment but is clearly a biased example as the number of cases analysed falls with age whereas the survey confirmed an increasing incidence with advancing age.

There are good things in this book, but they are like the cherries in a cherry cake, not the greater part. It provides a useful summary of present knowledge and practice but cannot, at a cost of almost £13, be strongly recommended to the ordinary reader.

J. S. McCORMICK

**Reference**

Royal College of Physicians of London and British Cardiac Society (1976). *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians*, 10, 213-275.

**A DICTIONARY OF MEDICAL ETHICS AND PRACTICE**

William A. R. Thomson

John Wright and Sons  
Bristol (1977)

264 pages. Price £10

Reviewing a dictionary might seem to be

a daunting and difficult task but in fact this need not be so. Not all are books of desiccated knowledge through which one can catch an occasional glimpse of the author, for here is a fascinating treatise on all that is controversial in medicine. It is a skilfully and painstakingly researched book of facts spiced throughout with rich layers of opinion. Indeed, since there is, as the author notes, "less of a moral consensus in society at large", the main conclusion to be drawn from this dictionary is that the so called 'code' of ethics is nothing but a conglomeration of opinions.

William Thomson, a senior statesman among editors and surely the doyen of medical lexicographers, has written, rather than compiled, statements on several hundred topics, all of them controversial and all about situations where the doctor may run into trouble with society. Not only does he deal with subjects of obvious relevance to medical practice such as euthanasia, transplantation, rape and homosexuality but also covers a host of less related subjects such as albinism, cannibalism, exorcism, Mormons, and vivisection. Each entry is approached in a practical, clear, and dogmatic manner, and is followed by several references. The more important entries often occupy several pages. Any comment on the literary style would be impertinent, except to say that the book is beautifully written.

One major inconsistency permeates the pages of what is otherwise a high principled yet commonsense book. It is written to help and guide the student and the young doctor but its treatment of sex is in a tone which will be found laughable by many junior members of our profession. This is not to criticize in any way Dr Thomson's categorical views that all premarital and extra-marital intercourse should be condemned, that the 1967 Abortion Act should never have been introduced, and that trans-sexual surgery is a mutilating exercise performed only for the selfish satisfaction of a sexual deviant and his surgeon. These views were also evident in the author's book *Sex and its Problems*, published in 1968. We should not be surprised to find here also a strong case made for capital punishment and castration, in some circumstances, all of which may be the considered views of a large and senior section of the profession. Nevertheless, these ideas will be seen as so outrageously reactionary by the young that they will be unable to take the rest of the book seriously. This would be a great shame, for it ought to be within easy reach of them all.

**Reference**

M. J. AYLETT

Thomson, W. A. R. (Ed.) (1968). *Sex and its Problems*. Edinburgh and London: E. & S. Livingstone.