

HEALTH NEEDS HELP

Muriel Skeet and Elizabeth Crout
Blackwell Scientific, Oxford (1977)
79 pages. Price £1.95

Those who remember the inception of the NHS will never forget the confidence with which it was launched by its begetters. Here was the great Universal Aunt tending and guiding from the womb to the tomb. All we had to do was to sit back and be cosseted. Gone for ever is that glad confident morning—the facts of life, as is their wont, have obtruded remorselessly.

This study set out to discover whether there was a use for voluntary services within the NHS, and, if so, how much and what. The method used was 'action learning' involving professional and volunteer services in three areas—one urban and two rural. Action learning is always liable to be traumatic, and this exercise proved to be no exception. Conservative professionalism finds it hard to admit that any of its work can satisfactorily be done by lay volunteers (the theory of Professional Excellence): volunteer bodies tend to guard their territories as fiercely as any cock robin, and some just sulk and refuse to play. It says much for this research that any conclusions were reached at all.

Briefly, the main suggestion is that there should be three new categories of worker incorporated into the NHS. The first should consist of visitors, both to the hospital and to the home, and this class would need much humanity and little training; the second would consist of basically trained volunteers to perform the simple acts of nursing, chiefly in the home; and the third, who would need rather more training, would be able to carry out more responsible nursing procedures in the home and in the hospital, under supervision. The two last categories could well be supplied by the VAD organizations. These conclusions, and others, appear to be logical and desirable, but would clearly meet much opposition from heavily entrenched positions, not least perhaps from trade unions and professional bodies.

This is not an easy report to read as its style is at times obfusatory, and it tends to be cluttered with too much anecdote. Nonetheless, in these times of stringency and standstill in the NHS, it provides wholesome food for thought.

JOHN MILES

THE PAINFUL NECK AND BACK

James W. Fisk

Charles C. Thomas
Springfield, Illinois (1977)
209 pages. Price £10.25

Most general practitioners will have at some times felt inadequate in dealing with patients with backache or pain arising from the cervical spine. Many now realize that osteopathic techniques have something to offer, but there is still the problem of the 'quack' status of the unregistered practitioner and the difficulty of deciding which kind of patient is likely to be helped by manipulative treatment. It is therefore a great pleasure to find that a general practitioner and member of the College has written a book which not only deals with this subject from the practitioner's point of view but also indicates the scope of manipulation in the whole spectrum of orthopaedic and rehabilitation care.

Dr Fisk is attached to the Department of Rheumatology and Rehabilitation at the Waikato Hospital in New Zealand and his book opens with a very complimentary foreword by Dr B. S. Rose, who is head of that department and a member of the WHO Expert Advisory Panel on Chronic Degenerative Disorders.

Dr Fisk starts with a general discussion on manipulation and lays down a series of absolute contraindications. Some might say that he is over-cautious, but no-one could reasonably claim that he advocates anything other than sound clinical practice. He discusses the aetiology of spinal pain and the anatomy of the spine with special reference to the facet joints. This part of the book is extremely well illustrated with clear diagrams. Then follow excellent chapters on history taking and examination, after which he deals with the manipulative techniques which he uses. This whole section is beautifully illustrated with photographs of a high standard, showing the stages of each technique in detail and also demonstrating the skeletal relationships of many of them.

He goes on to deal with exercise programmes for all parts of the spine, and here again the photography is excellent. He concludes with some sound advice on prevention. There is a helpful bibliography but the index is inadequate—which is the only real criticism I have of the book.

However, the book is extremely well written and fills a real need, not merely as a handbook on manipulative procedures for the general practitioner, but as a helpful introduction to the subject for the orthopaedic surgeon. It will prove a useful addition to any medical centre library.

R. J. GROVE-WHITE

BACTERIOLOGY, VIROLOGY AND IMMUNITY FOR STUDENTS OF MEDICINE 10TH EDITION

F. S. Stewart and T. S. L. Beswick

Ballière Tindall
London (1977)

496 pages. Price £9.75

This is not a useful book for general practitioners. As far as microbiological textbooks are concerned, our needs are twofold. First, we need a quick-to-use reference text in the consulting room, in order to get help with diagnosis and management, and secondly, we need access to an authoritative tome, with comprehensive references for less hurried reading.

Stewart and Beswick answer neither requirement. The book is lacking in both diagrams and other aids to speedy fact-finding. Its clinical coverage is too scanty to be useful and its language somewhat antiquated ("acute rheumatism" for rheumatic fever). There are *no* proper references. (Are medical students discouraged from free-thinking these days?)

I showed the book to a final-year medical student and she was not impressed.

T. F. PAINE

AN ATLAS OF CARDIOLOGY, ELECTROCARDIOGRAMS AND CHEST X-RAYS

Neville Conway

Wolfe Medical Publications
London (1977)

250 pages. Price £12

This book is intended as "a clinical benchbook to assist undergraduates, family doctors, and physicians (both in training and established) at the bedside". The first section of the book deals with the ECG, and the second discusses the chest x-ray.

Emphasis has been placed on pattern recognition of the ECG, though the easily comprehended explanations accompanying each illustration often mention the theory underlying the interpretation. However, this is not a suitable book from which to learn without a basic knowledge of the ECG. There are 30 examples of the variability of the normal ECG and eight examples of recording faults! All the common and important ECG abnormalities are illustrated, as well as some rarer examples. The 453 ECGs shown are clearly reproduced and provide an ex-