

cellent reference for anyone, except perhaps for the specialist cardiologist.

The section on the chest x-ray contains almost 300 plates, accompanied by helpful and often illuminating comments. There are 41 examples of the variations seen in the normal chest x-ray, and all the commonly occurring conditions are illustrated. The extensive index enables the reader to find illustrations easily.

Considering its size, this comprehensive and beautifully produced book is good value for money. It will undoubtedly find its way on to many doctors' bookshelves. However, although there is a growing interest in ECGs among general practitioners, who may either have direct access to an ECG machine or else receive photocopies from hospital departments, only those general practitioners with a special interest in ECG interpretation or cardiology will want to buy it. Postgraduate libraries should certainly have a copy.

CLIVE STUBBINGS

BIOFEEDBACK AIDED BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION IN MANAGING ESSENTIAL HYPERTENSION

Chandra Patel

*Biomonitoring Applications Inc.
New York (1977)*

120 minutes. Price £5.25

Original scientific work of high quality is as rare in general practice as it is in well-known research units: the urge to publish and progress unfortunately too often results in much publication and little progress. Dr Chandra Patel has, however, done work on the use of yoga and biofeedback in hypertension which is both scientifically impressive and practically helpful. There is no doubt that in the treatment of stress diseases high-technology medicine must soon begin to learn how useful non-drug methods can be, and in this two-hour tape recording Dr Patel reviews her own work and that of others in the field. However, since she does not add much to what she has written in her scientific papers, it is difficult to see that many general practitioners would want to spend as much money as this.

There are also snags associated with a tape recording. The reviewer has an especially heavy responsibility placed upon him, for no listener can go to a shop, pick up a few attractive titles and rifle through them looking for something that interests him. Nor, to be

practical, is a tape recording at all easy to use as a work of reference. Perhaps rural doctors are the ones who might benefit most; travelling long distances on lonely roads, they might welcome the distraction of a tape on biofeedback—providing it does not relax them into sleep!

S. L. BARLEY

SELF HELP AND HEALTH: MUTUAL AID FOR MODERN PROBLEMS

David Robinson and Stuart Henry

Martin Robertson, London (1977)

164 pages. Price £5.85

The sub-title of this book is perhaps more accurate than the title, because it has nothing to do with people helping themselves as individuals by self-medication or self care in illness. It is concerned with the many and various self-help groups which have come into being through disillusionment with statutory supportive institutions and the failure of professionals to understand people's real problems. Often a doctor, at his wit's end, will say, "You will have to live with it". However, if the patient can meet other people who 'have to live with it' whether 'it' be backache or homosexuality, his burden will be shared.

In this way a vast number of self-help organizations have grown up, the earliest and best known being Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight-watchers. Nowadays almost any long-term problem has an organization associated with it and it is right that the doctor should be aware of these and advise his patients. Some are like elite clubs requiring sponsorship; others welcome anyone who shares the particular problem.

The motives of the organizations may be mixed—mutual support, cure, a social life, propaganda are all described and the authors differentiate between these carefully. However, one problem which they mention but do not tackle boldly are the organizations concerned with deviations which are not approved of by the general public. Do paedophiles meet to help each other to escape from an addiction which is not accepted? This we do not know. There is a danger in such groups that doctors and other professionals may hand over their caring responsibilities. It is easier for a surgeon to give his patient a leaflet about the Ileostomy Association than to understand what it means to have an ileostomy.

The last section of the book comprises a list of 78 self-help organizations with their addresses. Most are self explanatory but others have names such as SHARE, LIFT, REACH, and CRACK and it is a pity that it is not clearly stated what these organizations are. The list, however, will be useful to the practising doctor, which would make the book a valuable addition to hospital or practice libraries.

C. P. ELLIOTT BINNS

CONTINUOUS MORBIDITY REGISTRATION SENTINEL STATIONS. ANNUAL REPORT 1976

*Netherlands Institute of General
Practice, Utrecht*

Nowhere in the continent of Europe has the study of morbidity patterns in general practice aroused such interest as in Holland. Practice in some European countries is not so dissimilar from ours that methods developed in Britain cannot be applied, often with little modification, and in setting up a network of 'sentinel stations' the Dutch have created a research instrument resembling that which provides data for the Birmingham Research Unit's weekly returns service. They have, however, gone one step ahead by publishing a regular series of *Annual Reports*. As a concession to our national inadequacy with other people's languages the body of these reports is in excellent, readable English.

In its seven years of life the network of sentinel practice has become firmly established as a national data source, and one which is used when questions of epidemiological or general medical interest are required to be answered. Special studies in 1946 were of multiple sclerosis, the frequency with which cervical smears were taken, and how often doctors were approached with a request for euthanasia. Previous studies have included the use of *post facto* contraceptives, therapeutic abortion, and the consequences of head injury.

It is acknowledged that the 40 'spotter physicians' who take part in the study are a selected and not a random group. This is inevitable in any country. Their geographical distribution throughout Holland is satisfactory and the quality of the data is likely to be high. Nevertheless, steps are already being taken to validate the data collection procedures in order to make further improvements.

Some have always hoped that international comparisons of morbidity will

become as accurate and useful as inter-regional comparisons in any country. The work that our Dutch friends are doing is a source of great encouragement, and it is already clear that their example is being followed in Denmark and elsewhere. We can regard these reports not only as a valuable source of sound information but as an example and a stimulus to all the other European countries.

R. J. F. H. PINSENT

HYPNOSIS IN PRACTICE — ITS APPLICATION IN STRESS AND DISEASE

D. H. Lawrence Shaw

Ballière Tindall, London (1977)

138 pages. Price £2.75

After dismissing some popular misconceptions about hypnosis and the qualities of susceptible subjects, Dr Shaw devotes his next three chapters to a 'do-it-yourself' approach to the induction, properties, and problems of the hypnotic state. He adopts a 'physiological' stance to explain some of the observed phenomena that occur during hypnosis but recognizes that some of these observations would not stand up to stringent scientific analysis.

Despite the many references, it is unfortunate that none are given to the quoted case of a woman who was hypnotized during childbirth and subsequently developed amenorrhoea because of a post-hypnotic suggestion that all bleeding would cease after the delivery. The amenorrhoea persisted for several months until the hypnotic injunction was lifted.

Great emphasis is placed on the protection of susceptible subjects from 'lay' hypnotists by planting post-hypnotic suggestions that they should allow only 'qualified' hypnotists to hypnotize them. I would not have too much faith in this as a protective mechanism for the public, but I suppose the degree of public protection that is necessary depends on the potency of the medicine

and I think that the present safeguards for this particular medicine are adequate.

The account of the history and development of hypnosis is disjointed merely because of its brevity.

In the ensuing chapters that deal with the application of hypnosis to dentistry, general practice, obstetrics, casualty, and the hospital ward, the underlying theme is that it is a vital component of good medicine to obtain the full confidence of the patient. Indeed, the refined placebo is a basic tool of the successful physician.

Although this compact little book may have popular appeal, I am not a great believer in learning practical techniques from instruction manuals. I myself prefer to learn by observing the practitioner at work.

SIMON JENKINS

TRANQUILLITY DENIED. STRESS AND ITS IMPACT TODAY

Anthony Hordern

Rigby

Sydney (1977)

423 pages. Price £12.50

In his dedication to Alexander Kennedy, Dr Hordern refers to the wide horizons that he believes modern psychiatry should have and provides a fascinating review of the causes of stress in society today, drawing on a wide range of research.

Beginning with technology's accelerating momentum, he deals with affluence, overproduction, the depletion of resources, and the terrible wastefulness of our throw-away economy. Set against our present opulence is the issue of poverty and increasing crime. He draws attention to the decline in status of patriarchal institutions, which has taken place in politics, the Church, the army, and the family, and he notes the changes in society leading to permissive-

ness, with an increase in pornography and venereal disease. He examines the possible limits of material development and the problems of immediate communication by radio and television.

He describes the family as coming under pressure as never before, and discusses the ever-increasing army of the aged. He is particularly aware of the pressures of uncertainty put on men in a unisex society and the increasing stresses on women now that their traditional tasks of childbearing and home-making are being decried and they are under pressure from Women's Lib.

Having stated the stresses of today, Dr Hordern goes on to examine the non-medical tranquillizers, alcohol, nicotine, and cannabis, and their attendant problems. Having worked in America, Britain, and Australia, he is in a position to review the public expectation of their doctors in these countries, and he notes there is a sad fall in the status of medical staff, which is fairly general.

He summarizes the doctor's task and the difficulties of finding time for psychiatric patients. There is also the problem of making his way through the psychotropic drug jungle, and this brings him to the subject of self-poisoning, which has reached epidemic proportions. He goes on to discuss how the stresses of modern life produce depression and his chapter on the recognition and management of depression is clear and comprehensive. He urges not only the correct prescription and treatment, but also support and encouragement for the patient. He points out that melancholics are often conscientious and high principled individuals who are reluctant to take time off work and who, unless they are tactfully supervised, may make stupid or wrong decisions when ill.

This is an interesting and stimulating book from a psychiatrist who not only has a warm humanity towards his patients as whole people, but also observes them against the background of the society in which they live. For this reason, the book is of great relevance to all in general practice.

C. A. H. WATTS