

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

TRANQUILITY 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