

the section on radiodiagnosis where the pros and cons of the 'routine' x-ray are discussed.

Breast lesions in children, torsion of the testis, Menière's disorder (often misdiagnosed), and HD-lipoprotein levels in coronary artery disease are among the many other subjects discussed which general practitioners will find helpful.

Now in its 96th year, the *Medical Annual* remains a 'good buy' and is well served by its contributors. What, I wonder, is planned for the centenary edition?

H. W. K. ACHESON

RUNNING A PRACTICE

R. V. H. Jones, K. J. Bolden,
D. J. Pereira Gray, M. S. Hall

Croom Helm Ltd
London (1978)

186 pages. Price £6.95

It is strange how gaps in the literature of a subject remain unrecognized until someone fills them. Gaps may be in clinical knowledge or, as in the present instance, in an aspect of the application of that knowledge, the logistics of general practice.

Time was when it was enough for the doctor to run his practice by improvisation and inspiration, not to say imagination as well! Generations of doctors satisfied themselves that what they did was just right for their particular patients who were, of course, quite different from those of the other doctor a quarter of a mile down the road.

Then partnerships came in, and practice management became a matter of consensus and delegation to staff whose duties varied from practice to practice. There was scope for good organization, or bad, but the gap remained; there was no source of guidance and advice to which the general practitioner could turn when faced with the problem of running his practice.

How have the four authors of this book succeeded in meeting the need? They have pooled the experience of four practices of different types presenting different organizational problems. They have researched the regulations painstakingly and thoroughly, looking far beyond the limits of their own practice areas. They have crystallized many thought sequences and perplexities

which must have afflicted all of us at one time or another into clear logical paragraphs to which reference can easily be made.

Because the four authors worked together there is an even and balanced spread of emphasis on different aspects of practice, though it is surprising, considering their academic experience as well as their experience of practice, that the organization of a practice for teaching purposes is underplayed. Undoubtedly the comings and goings of students of all kinds, student nurses, health visitors, even social workers in training, as well as medical students and postgraduates, cause disturbance to practice routine which can be compensated for by thought and action. This is something for the next edition, predictably not very far away.

When reviewers say this book or that is required reading for a number of different groups of people the statement has a hollow ring. *Running a Practice* will, however, have something to tell everyone who is engaged in the running of a practice, whether he or she is an established principal or a trainee just starting to contemplate the running of a practice. Furthermore, if they could be persuaded to read it, doctors in hospitals and other areas of practice would find a new and realistic insight into what general practice is all about.

R. J. F. H. PINSENT

ELECTROCARDIOGRAMS— A SYSTEMATIC METHOD OF READING THEM. 4th EDITION

M. L. Armstrong

John Wright
Bristol (1978)

189 pages. Price £3.50

Electrocardiography is becoming a routine tool in general practice and many practitioners are in the habit of reading the tracings themselves. The basic skill required for this is the ability to distinguish between the normal and the abnormal and to be able to identify the common abnormalities. However, some general practitioners have a special interest in electrocardiography and wish to be able to analyse in rather greater depth.

The preface and back cover imply that this book is suitable for a beginner and it is true that no previous knowledge is assumed, but the detailed approach and tightly-packed information would be daunting to anyone

taking his first electrocardiographic steps. Although there are no more than the necessary basic facts of cardiac electrophysiology, there is a very comprehensive account of the dysrhythmias, common and rare, simple and complex, which seems to reflect the author's enthusiasm rather than the general practitioner's need: there are 71 pages on dysrhythmias but only 16 pages on myocardial infarction, which does not represent the average general practitioner's balance of interest.

The title tells us that Dr Armstrong has a systematic method of reading electrocardiograms and he makes his order of reading his order of teaching. This produces problems at times: for instance, on page 46 he suggests that it would be "as well at this stage to read this section on page 84". This may be systematic reading but it is not systematic teaching.

The book is fairly well bound, the standard of printing is high, and the price is reasonable. Although it cannot be recommended for the general practitioner who wishes to gain an elementary all-round understanding of electrocardiography, it does, however, provide a full and interesting account of the dysrhythmias for those who already have some knowledge.

J. D. BRUCE

HANDBOOK OF CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY

Felix Bochner, George Carruthers,
Jens Kampmann and Janice Steiner

Little, Brown Company
Boston, USA (1978)

313 pages. Price £5

Much unbiased information concerning drugs and therapeutics exists for medical practitioners but there has always been a gap between the encyclopaedic classics such as Martindale and excellent little handbooks such as the *British National Formulary*.

Now comes an American textbook, published as one of a series dealing with the whole medical curriculum. The four authors are clinical pharmacologists from Australia, Canada, Denmark, and England respectively. Their claim is that "This useful manual . . . will serve all medical practitioners as an essential, fingertip guide to the practice of informed drug therapeutics in any branch of medicine", and they are to be congratulated on providing such a wealth of readily accessible information within one small paperback.