

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.

There are 10 short chapters dealing with essential topics in a forthright way. Headings include: Do we achieve rational therapy?; Drugs and renal disease; Medication during pregnancy; and Medication in the elderly. The introductory chapter on rational therapy by Professor Azarnoff alone makes compelling reading. He concludes that we should all strive to maximize the rational use of drugs, not rationalize the maximal use of drugs.

The greater part of the book is concerned with the drug profiles. A selection of over 100 commonly used drugs, generically named, are considered in depth. I particularly liked the clear headings, the crisp style, and the relevance of information supplied to clinical practice.

This book should appeal to all medical practitioners interested in the effects of the body on drugs as well as the effects of drugs on the body. Reviews and references are given at the end of each chapter for every drug discussed. British literature is freely quoted. One or two names (for example, cromolyn sodium for disodium cromoglycate) are unfamiliar, but this will not distract readers.

I enjoyed reviewing this work and I look forward to having it in our practice library.

COLIN WATERS

SOD'S LAW: A COMPENDIUM OF LAWS, PRINCIPLES, AXIOMS, THEOREMS, POSTULATES, ETC. GOVERNING THE HUMAN SITUATION

Walter Mee

Keepsake Press
Richmond (1978)

12 pages. Price 30p

The general sense of Sod's Law is well known. What may be less familiar is the special case which it governs. As originally enunciated, Sod's Law described the properties of a buttered bun in free flight: it falls buttered side down. Always.

The feeling of hopelessness engendered by dispassionate contemplation of Man's puny attempts to grapple with the perverseness of so-called inanimate objects has fortunately not deterred some brave spirits from patiently recording and codifying their several encounters. The result is this slim volume, not claiming to be exhaustive but containing the distilled experience of those bruised pioneers, now sadder and wiser men.

The tone is sometimes defiant (Anthony's Law: "Don't force it, get a large hammer"); mostly wry (Finagle's

Rule: "Experiments should be reproducible. They should all fail in the same way"); occasionally cynical (Jone's Law—Kipling's Inversion: "The man who can smile when things go wrong has thought of someone he can blame it on"). It is understandable that an element of desperation should creep in, as with Harvard's Law: "Under the most rigorously controlled conditions of pressure, temperature, volume, humidity, and other variables—the organism will do as it damn well pleases".

This last is a reminder that not only inanimate objects are covered, and because they are all of universal application these laws are readily extended into the more familiar terrain of medicine. Here they serve to cut us down to size, as with Hoare's Law: "Inside every large programme is a small programme struggling to get out"; or Sevarenid's: "The chief cause of problems is solutions".

Every experienced general practitioner will find value and consolation in this little book. To extend its message into yet another field where helpless frustration is not unknown, it could put fresh heart into trainers and course organizers, for whom it might reasonably be regarded as compulsory reading.

J. S. NORELL

REPORT

Association of University Teachers of General Practice

THE Annual Scientific Meeting of the Association of University Teachers of General Practice took place at Imperial College, London, on 13 and 14 July 1978. Over 100 members and guests attended.

First day

First session

The opening address was given by Professor A. H. Crisp, Chairman of the Advisory Board in Medicine to the University of London, and the first paper was given by Dr N. C. H. Stott, Cardiff, on the outcome of winter

upper respiratory tract infections in children. This was followed by a paper from Southampton presented by Dr G. C. Metcalfe on sleep problems in children. The next paper was from Dr P. R. Williams, University College Hospital Medical School, on consultation patterns of infants brought to a health centre. This was followed by a presentation from St Mary's Hospital by Dr B. Jarman on a drug/time study of general practitioner consultations. The morning session ended with a paper from Dr G. K. Freeman, Southampton, on the treatment of respiratory illnesses. Each paper was followed by a period of discussion and questions.