

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.

Second session

The second session dealt with psychiatric illness and the first paper was from Dr M. R. Salkind, from St Bartholomew's Hospital, on the validation of an anxiety inventory for general practice, and the distribution of anxiety in England and Wales. This was followed by a paper from Professor P. M. Higgins, from Guy's Hospital Medical School, on emotional illness in a new community.

Annual meeting and dinner

These papers were followed by the annual business meeting and in the evening the conference dinner was held at the Royal College of General Practitioners. The President of the College, Dr E. V. Kuenssberg, attended as a guest of the Association and during the evening a presentation was made to Professor P. S. Byrne in recognition of his outstanding work on behalf of the Association.

Second day

First session

The morning session on the second day began with a paper by Dr G. Scambler, Guy's Hospital Medical School, on gynaecological symptoms in the community and this was followed by a presentation from Dr P. M. Reilly, Belfast, on the characteristics of patients who attend accident and emergency departments from a general practice. Dr A. Jacob from Dundee then discussed the use of diagnostic facilities in general practice before entry into a new health centre. The last two papers of the morning both concerned education, the first being a new concept in continuing education for general practitioners from Miss Jill Rogers, Glasgow, and the second a course in human development, behaviour, and ageing from Mr W. Morgan, Newcastle.

Second session

The first three papers in the final session were concerned with teaching: the first was on assessment of medical students in psychiatry in primary medical care from Dr D. Jackson, Southampton; the second on assessment of educational objectives in the family placement from Dr H. Paterson, Leicester; and the third on developing methods of evaluation appropriate to undergraduate teaching in general practice from Dr T. S. Murray, Glasgow.

The session ended with a debate on the myth of undergraduate/postgraduate split in medical education. Drs N. C. H. Stott, Cardiff, and H. J. Wright, Leeds, presented working papers and this led to a lively debate.

The meeting ended with a buffet reception in the postgraduate medical centre at St Thomas's Hospital.

The next Annual Scientific Meeting will take place in Edinburgh on 6 and 7 July 1979.

T. S. MURRAY
Secretary

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