

the title of "The Royal College of General Practitioners of England" (1847/48). Leave was granted to introduce this Bill into Parliament in 1850 (McConaghey, 1972) but alas it was not proceeded with and we had to wait another hundred years. We know a great deal about the intense activities in trying to form a College but the reasons for the failure in 1850 await further investigation.

DEREK BLOOR

Montreux
Hunters Ride
Lawnswood
Near Stourbridge
West Midlands DY7 5QN.

References

- McConaghey, R. M. S. (1972). *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, 22, 775-787.
- Select Committee on Registration of Medical Practitioners (1847-48). Third report. Vol. XV, session no. 702, appendix no. 11, p. 381.

VASECTOMY

Sir,
There is still a good deal of misunderstanding about vasectomy and I

should be glad if you would allow me to explain the facts.

Many people seem to think that the operation can be done only in a special clinic and so do not consult their general practitioner if they are considering vasectomy. However, although the operation is being done in clinics, in places where these exist, it is, in fact, more often dealt with by general practitioners, who either perform the operation themselves or else refer patients to suitable surgeons.

The operation can, of course, be done under the National Health Service, but since there are often long waiting lists, patients can ask to be referred for a private appointment, at least in the first instance, in order to discuss the possible waiting time if the operation is to be done under the NHS, or the cost if it is to be done privately.

I hope your readers will help to dispel this misunderstanding among their patients.

L. N. JACKSON
Honorary Director

The Crediton Project
West Longsight
Crediton
Devon.

COMPUTER EXHIBITION

Sir,
As Exhibition Secretary I should like to apologise that it has not been possible to arrange the exhibition of a micro-computer programmed for general practice use in the Practice Organization Room, as previously announced.

The supplier had made a firm promise that this would be available for exhibition on several occasions; however, it proved very difficult to eliminate the inherent snags of the computer, in particular its very limited storage capacity.

Should it be possible to produce this unit with a modified programme at a later date we will inform by post all those doctors who have expressed their interest in this project as soon as we have a definite date. I hope in the meantime members of the College will accept my apology for not mounting the proposed exhibit as promised.

R. M. RIDSDILL SMITH
Exhibition Secretary

14 Princes Gate
Hyde Park
London SW7 1PV.

BOOK REVIEWS

CHILD ABUSE—A READER AND SOURCEBOOK

Constance M. Lee (Ed.)

Open University Press
Milton Keynes (1978)
328 pages. Price £5.50

CHILD ABUSE—A STUDY TEXT

Vida Carver (Ed.)

Open University Press
Milton Keynes (1978)
312 pages. Price £4.95

My reaction to the prospect of reading 508 pages on child abuse was probably the same as any reader's would have been—a groan, a yawn, and a guilty conscience that I ought to be more interested. We all know that this is an important subject, but social work jargon, at-risk registers, and all the paraphernalia of case conferences tend

to have a numbing effect on the average medical mind.

However, these books are magnificent. I have rarely read a more stimulating work. The Open University have presented in two volumes a complete course on child abuse, aimed at anyone who might be involved in the subject, from doctors to lawyers, from play-group organizers to health visitors, and whereas most books aimed at a large audience tend to be over-simplified, this one avoids that trap.

The first volume, the reader and sourcebook, contains a large number of papers and extracts from books which would not be readily accessible otherwise. The 31 articles range from an introductory and fascinating look at normal childrearing, through medical and psychiatric papers, such as those by Selwyn Smith and Ronald MacKeith, to case reports and government and local authority papers—including the Maria Colwell report. The papers, I am glad to say, include full reference lists, so that the interested reader can trace almost all the major work done on this topic.

Volume two—the study text, is the Open University course. In simple terms, it involves studying a paper from the reader, reading a number of comments on it, answering questions and checking the answers, and even reading comments on one's likely answers. I was staggered at the efficiency of this technique for making one actually 'study' a subject, rather than superficially glancing over it. The course is complete. Unlike other Open University courses this one is not tied in with any broadcasts, and at the end of it one should have an excellent understanding of all forms of child abuse.

However, this is a relatively large treatise on a relatively small subject. It would be encouraging to think that every general practitioner would have the inclination and the time to study this course but, as we all know, there are an infinite number of equally important subjects in general practice. Should the reader find the time, I am quite certain he will not be disappointed with this first-rate work.

DAVID HASLAM