

seemed so different from what I had encountered in hospital. This pocket-sized handbook describes, amongst other things, which forms are for what, how to prescribe controlled drugs, and which deaths to report to the coroner. Wisely the authors refrain from declaring their personal preferences in terms of treatments; for instance, the list of content for the black bag includes 'anti-emetic' rather than 'Stemetil' or metoclopramide.

The book is written in short-note form and there are many useful tables ranging from immunization schedules to emergency 'Sections' of the Mental Health Act.

Some of the information listed is rather obvious and unlikely to be of much practical use (for example, principles of coping with sports injuries, or overdoses). On the other hand some sections need expanding. One concerns 'sudden death'. Deaths in the home are different from deaths in hospital, and the trainee, perhaps unexpectedly facing this situation on his own for the first time could benefit from more information. What should be done with the body? What happens to the various bits of the death certificate? Similarly, I would have liked to have seen more on National Insurance certification, the role of the Regional Medical Officer, and regulations concerning the keeping of dangerous drugs in the car.

The book is aimed primarily at trainees; indeed several pages are devoted to "The Training Year". This section, too, could be expanded to include further information on, for instance, the regulations concerning reimbursement of expenses incurred when renting extra accommodation, or how a telephone can be installed free into a trainee's home. Even so, trainees will certainly find this book useful; furthermore, I believe that all medical students should be armed with this guide before they start their general practice attachments: its price as well as its size will suit their pockets.

PETER SELLEY  
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### PRIMARY CARE

*Cynthia J. Leitch and  
Richard V. Tinker (Eds)*

*Davis  
Philadelphia (1978)  
589 pages. Price £12*

The rapid changes occurring in American health care have necessitated some

revolutionary developments in medical education and textbooks. Whereas our own British revolution in primary care has involved just the doctor and his patients, our transatlantic colleagues have had to cope with a whole new aspect of care—the role of the family nurse practitioner.

The startling thing about this book is that it is written by and for primary practitioners, both nurses and doctors. For the British reader, this is the great sticking point, for many of the chapters contain so much anatomy, physiology, and pathology that it is hard to believe that anyone without a formal medical background would find it of practical use.

Nevertheless, it is refreshing to read such a wide and discerning view of primary practice. The influence of the family, above all others, on the health of the individual and the relationship between maternal stress and the symptom-reporting of both mother and child are nicely dealt with; and all trainees in all disciplines, medical and para-medical, would learn from the authors' plea to clarify first the nature of the contract with the patient. Instead of protesting against abuses of the system, they say, we should stop erroneously assuming that people have the good sense and courtesy to come to the clinician because they are sick and want to get well!

Yet this is a textbook for the American reader. Its excellent coverage of the relevant demography and social material, its approach to screening, and all its references belong entirely to the USA. Its clinical ethos is theirs too with, for example, emphasis on the pathology of acute bronchitis involving secondary bacterial invasion and an implied routine use of antibiotics.

Students of comparative health care organization will be interested in this book but it will not find a place in general practice literature in this country.

M. J. AYLETT

### ALCOHOLISM AND TREATMENT

*David Armor, J. Michael Polich,  
Harriet B. Stambul*

*John Wiley & Sons Ltd  
Bristol (1978)  
349 pages. Price £11.75*

The book will not appeal to the average general practitioner. The main part of it consists of the Rand Corporation report in full, which was initially published in America in 1976 and aroused con-

siderable controversy. Although the press reported it as saying that after suitable treatment alcoholics might safely resume drinking, it is clear on reading it that this was not stated, although for a few alcoholics controlled moderate drinking may be more successful than attempts at abstinence. Unfortunately, the report has no hard facts to show which alcoholics are safe to begin drinking, and which are not.

Following the report comes a section presenting different reactions to it by numerous experts throughout the USA. Some of these appear as photocopies of the original letter sent in reply, and I personally found this irrelevant and irritating. One reads: "Dear Ernie, Here is the report you requested. Sincerely yours." That is all there is on the entire page.

Readers who have a strong interest in alcoholism will already have bought this book. For the general reader, there are better books available, and much cheaper.

DAVID HASLAM

### MEDICINE: THE FORGOTTEN ART

*C. Elliott-Binns*

*Pitman Medical  
Tunbridge Wells (1978)  
199 pages. Price £4.95*

Christopher Elliott-Binns, a Northampton general practitioner, is a Greek scholar with a particular interest in Hippocrates, and—on the evidence of this book—no mean medical philosopher himself. He has here set down in a translation less archaic than the one we are familiar with (and in some ways less attractive) Hippocrates' aphorisms, and in a series of commentaries written around them points their relevance to present-day medicine while providing a distillate of his own wisdom.

He writes easily and perceptively, in a style reminiscent of Clark-Kennedy, from his own long experience as a family doctor and from thinking deeply about the things he has seen. The book is spared any trace of portentousness by its strong vein of common sense and a sense of humour often wry and self-mocking. He has wise things to say about relationships, including the tricky one arising from the affection and regard which all doctors come to feel for some of their patients.

On the huge increase in the consumption of sedative medicines he remarks pointedly that the truly drug-