

sions and pulling thoughts together, most people are anxious to leave to avoid the London rush hour. All in all, it turns an interesting conference into an endurance test. The College headquarters is turning into a nice Club of which

I am pleased to be a member, but it is not a conference centre and perhaps the College should urgently consider ways of improving the situation.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### BEHAVIOURAL TREATMENT OF OBSESSIONAL STATES

H. R. Beech and M. Vaughan

John Wiley Ltd  
Chichester (1978)

189 pages. Price £7.50

The severe obsessional state is rare in general practice (amongst patients, at any rate) but when it occurs the compulsive rituals of up to several hours are distressing for all concerned and can cripple the patient himself. Relatively little is known about the course of the affliction and the best way to manage it. The authors of this book are clinical psychologists at the University of Manchester and they have produced a very full account of the behavioural treatment of this condition and an extensive review of the literature. It is a technical work for a specialized readership and few general practitioners would want to possess it, though they might wish to be able to refer to it to find out about the variety of treatments available or to learn what their patients may expect when undergoing a particular therapy.

The authors are doubtful about the validity of the so-called typical pre-morbid personality and believe that the illness magnifies pre-morbid characteristics, whatever they might be. They found that prognosis was uncertain and this made it difficult to evaluate treatments. Sometimes recovery followed treatment rapidly—suspiciously rapidly in the authors' opinion—but perhaps the most significant message for general practitioners is the authors' lack of enthusiasm for any of the treatment modes they have studied. For instance, systematic desensitization, developed by Wolpe from his work with neurotic cats (he made them that way first) is little better than 50 per cent successful. Other methods such as modelling, flooding, response prevention, satiation, and thought-stopping, fare no better.

They quote an interesting example of

“self-regulation” whereby in order to give himself permission to perform a ritual the patient has to “buy a ticket”, in this case a self-administered electric shock. Psychotherapy is mentioned but was found to be not successful and is recommended as an adjunct only. One patient who spent three hours in checking rituals before going to bed had treatment which included a hug and a kiss from his wife if he succeeded in leaving out a room from his rituals, and “in some instances a dollar was dropped from the therapist's bill”. He was found to be symptom free at eight months' follow-up.

J. S. NORELL

### THE USE OF DRUGS IN PSYCHIATRY

J. Crammer, B. Barraclough, and B. Heine

Gaskell Books  
London (1978)

240 pages. Price £3.95

Attempted medical polyglottery is the bane of the general practitioner reviewer. So many of the books written for one discipline purport to speak also for general practice; and yet they usually do not.

This book is written for the trainee psychiatrist and for those paramedical workers involved in clinical psychiatry, and for them it is informative and useful as a source of reference on modern drug usage in psychiatry. Though laudable in the scepticism of its approach to the patent-orientated molecular juggling of the pharmaceutical industry, it is somewhat cavalier in its treatment of new anti-depressants. Though we must accept that only the original tricyclics of the 1960s have been proven to be both effective and safe, mention of possible major advantages of more recent developments should have been made.

Gaskell Books is an imprint of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Excellent for specialists, its publications will be of much less use to those barefoots who treat the unorganized generality of psychiatric illness in primary care. For them, the middle section of the *British National Formulary* supplemented by the *Prescribers' Journal* remains a better deal.

M. J. AYLETT

### CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY: BASIC PRINCIPLES IN THERAPEUTICS 2nd EDITION

Kenneth L. Melmon and Howard F. Morrelli (Eds)

Baillière Tindall  
London (1978)

1146 pages. Price £18.00

The rate of introduction of new drugs seems to have slowed somewhat during the last few years and there is some indication that general practitioners are becoming more cautious about introducing new products at least until they have been well documented in general practice itself.

Undoubtedly there is a continuing need for general practitioners to update their own knowledge of clinical pharmacology and it is encouraging that a growing number of textbooks are becoming available to explain the pharmacological basis of therapeutics.

*Clinical Pharmacology* has now gone into a second edition but is not a book for light reading. It consists of over 1,100 pages and weighs nearly two kilos.

It gives full and comprehensive discussion of many topics but is curiously unhelpful for many of the issues facing general practitioners today. For example, about the problem of whether to use digoxin in heart