

**FAMILY PRACTICE
2ND EDITION**

R. Rakel, H. Conn, E. Robert, and
F. Howard

W. B. Saunders
Eastbourne (1978)

1186 pages. Price £27

So many textbooks of medicine seem to cover the whole spectrum of medicine except general practice that it is a pleasant surprise to discover one which professes to cover family practice. Perhaps the disappointment is inevitable: it really is too much to expect that any one book can adequately cover such a large topic.

Some sections are a delight to read. I particularly enjoyed those on counselling but found other chapters dull and turgid. Unequal editing must be partly to blame for such terrible tortology as "... the only two reasons for not doing an annual pap smear would be a recent negative smear . . .". The suggestion that "... the reward for doing a careful pap smear is the assurance that the patient with a negative smear is almost completely safe until her next examination and cytologic smear . . ." says something about American medicine's faith in technology and the doctor/patient relationship. The mixing of approved drug names with trade names, and American at that, would clearly be very confusing to British readers.

However, since much of the book is more relevant to the general practitioner's needs than new editions of standard textbooks of medicine, it should be given a place in the post-graduate centre library.

M. S. HALL

**THERAPY OPTIONS IN
PSYCHIATRY**

J. Connolly (Ed.)

Pitman Medical Publishing
Company Ltd
Tunbridge Wells, Kent (1978)

375 pages. Price £6.95

The therapeutic menu in psychiatry has changed considerably since the days of straight-jackets and padded cells for starters, incarceration for the main course, and no dessert. This book sets out to describe the many different forms of treatment on the current menu.

It is written by psychiatrists primarily for psychiatrists in training. Sixteen contributors, mainly from the West-

minster Hospital, have collaborated to review the full range of therapy options including drugs, psychotherapy, physical treatment, behavioural approaches, hypnotherapy, biofeedback, and many others. It explores specific problems such as personality disorders, sexual dysfunction and variance, childhood and adolescent difficulties, addiction, and psychogeriatrics, as well as outlining family and marital therapy. Different settings for psychiatric care are described and evaluated, with chapters on crisis intervention, walk-in clinics, the psychiatric day hospital, and rehabilitation units.

There is a healthy scepticism throughout, with an extensive bibliography at the end of each chapter. Unfortunately, parts of the book are heavily littered with jargon, making it hard going for the non-specialist. Some sections are too technical and detailed for all but the enthusiast, whilst others are mainly theoretical with little practical information.

There are a few amusing snippets. In one of the earliest accounts of electrical treatment in 1873, electricity was applied 26 times to a woman patient, who subsequently "appeared much brighter" and was "discharged". On page 287 we learn that "recent studies, using penile plethysmography in response to sexual arousal by erotic pictures showed a lower volume in response to alcohol." Fascinating though this may be, I cannot see it replacing the roadside breathalyser unless the weather improves.

Few general practitioners will want to read this book from cover to cover, but it is well worth a place on the shelves of a postgraduate library.

BRIAN J. GOLDEN

AN AGEING POPULATION

Vida Carver and Penny Liddiard
(Eds)

Hodder and Stoughton in
association with the Open
University Press

Sevenoaks, Kent (1978)

434 pages. Price £7.95 (hardback)
and £3.25 (paperback)

In advance of the 'geriatric explosion' the Open University is to transmit a course of the same title as this book. It aims to reach a wide audience among concerned members of the general public, including professional and volunteer workers; to identify the issues raised by the increased proportion of

older people in the community; and to provide the knowledge and skills needed if the handicaps traditionally associated with advanced age are to be reduced. *An Ageing Population* is a set book, or reader, for the course, but is only one component along with correspondence texts, student assignments, and other learning techniques.

Forty-seven carefully selected papers, some classics, some previously unpublished, are assembled here from both sides of the Atlantic. They consist of research reports, theoretical and review studies, personal testimonies, and even a science fiction writer's vision of the future, culled from the literature of all the relevant disciplines. They are grouped into eight sections, each dealing with a separate topic. The first part provides the wider context for all that follows and discusses ageing populations and gerontology. Then follows the experience of ageing, and the myths and stereotypes which structure it. The practical aspects of living in the community, and the needs and problems faced by such communities, lead on to aspects of sickness and disability, and the ways in which various specialized professional workers are involved. The final sections deal with co-ordination of care and co-operative efforts between caring individuals, and the improvement of the quality of life of old people in institutions.

Having been personally involved at the earliest design stage of this course, I can appreciate how well the author and her team have worked. The book they have produced is a remarkable collection of important material, and readers of this *Journal* will find it a useful source book whether they follow the Open University course, or not. There is no other book on the market that includes such practicalities as, for instance, the hazards of setting up a Good Neighbour scheme, or the anatomy of poverty of pensions expressed as analyses of their expenditure. It is useful to have classic papers by such authorities as Bernard Isaacs, John Brocklehurst, Klaus Bergman, and Cicely Saunders, and moving to read a personal testimony on recovery from stroke.

Charles Hodes contributes the section on the Care of the Elderly in General Practice. But I found particular pleasure in some of the contributions from sociology and social work, and in particular a taxonomy of teams, which will make everyone wonder whether the general practitioner team is 'collegial', 'specialized', 'homogeneous', 'heterogeneous', 'apprenticeship', or 'complex'.

This, then, really is one for the

practice library, more especially if there is a television in the common room for educational purposes! It will unite the team, give scope to the student, orientate the trainee, and validate the contribution of the social worker and nurse. The general practitioner who may be jaded through hyper-involvement, or staled by a need for wider scope, will find interesting facts and lively writing in this compact volume which is excellent value for money.

M. KEITH THOMPSON

SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS OF FAMILY MEDICINE

J. Fry, E. Gambrill, and R. Smith

*William Heinemann
London (1978)*

671 pages. Price £30

A sense of excitement and some envy accompanied my first sight of this book: envy, at the ambitiousness and energy of the editors, and excitement, since here at last, perhaps, was something one had waited for for a long time—a fresh integration of the many diverse sciences on which medicine is built and a discriminating anthology of old and new knowledge selected for its relevance to practice.

The 73 chapters of this book are the contributions of 91 authors, 10 of whom are general practitioners and the remainder specialists in a spectrum of disciplines. It is divided into 22 sections, built largely on a traditional system-based pattern with more general sections interspersed on the nature of family medicine, genetics, human development and ageing, immunology and microbiology, nutrition, and pharmacology. Its aims, the publisher's leaflet tells us, are "to enable senior practitioners to learn anew and re-learn what they have forgotten"; to "help trainers and trainees in vocational training programmes to cover their curriculum"; and to "fill a huge gap" by "bringing together in one volume the essential scientific bases on which modern family medicine is practised". Like all multi-author books, the approach adopted by its contributors is variable.

What does the reader get for his money? This is not a clinical textbook, so he will not find, for example, much clinical detail regarding measles; but he will find, instead, a fascinating chapter (by A. B. Christie) on "Infections and Immunization" which will give him pause in the wholesale prescribing of

antibiotics, and a critical respect for protective measures he is commonly called upon to provide. Similarly, in "The Central Nervous System" (by D. E. Shaw) he will find little about the clinical features of 'strokes', but a fine outline of neurological thinking. (And here, as an aside, the dictum that "an understanding of the patient's complaint may seem an obvious and easy part of the enquiry—on the contrary it is probably the most difficult part . . ." should be engraved over every practitioner's desk.)

In "Growing Up" (by J. A. Davies and F. N. Bamford) the reader is provided—in the space of 12 pages—with a wealth of material and a valuable reading list on infant development: and if he is not provoked by D. C. Morley's chapter, on "Growing Up in the Developing World", to reflect again on his own system of medical care (and on the lessons to be learnt from the 'Third World') then he is probably beyond professional redemption!

To pick out, in this way, a few of the gems in the straw is perhaps invidious—but is inevitable in reviewing a book of this size. Equally inevitable in such a book is the presence of a good deal of straw. This arises in part from the difficult task which specialist authors have been given ("to produce their material so that it is appropriate and applicable to normal general practice"). The rare is rarely seen—but occurs. If it is used to illustrate a scientific approach to problem solving in family medicine then its inclusion in such a book can well be justified as 'appropriate': but if not, it becomes no more than an exercise in erudition. And the book is not free from such. The obverse danger, to which the book also occasionally succumbs, is to include the common and omit the important (for example, in discussing acute myocardial infarction only the 'classical' presenting symptoms are described; but it is precisely the atypical presentations of which the general practitioner needs to be forewarned).

This book is an anthology; and like all anthologies it is the individual reader who decides how far it fulfils its title and its aims. However, the title used here, *Scientific Foundations*, raises important questions. Besides an appropriate body of verified 'facts' (carefully separated from personal opinion), does not the 'scientific basis' of family medicine—as of any discipline—include some analysis of the mental processes on which it is built—in this context, for example, some attention to the processes and hazards involved in data collection, in classification and its uses, in handling probabilities, and in assessing the

relative merits of alternative care? The essence of the scientific approach lies not solely in the content of the material it handles, but also in the way it handles it. These, however, find no place in the book—indeed, early on (p. 2) the authors equate 'scientific basis' with a 'core of knowledge', and it is this approach which dominates the book. Inevitably, such foundations are shifting ones.

Nevertheless, this book should be on the library shelves of every postgraduate medical centre.

H. J. WRIGHT

NUTRITION AND DISEASE

R. J. Jarrett (Ed.)

*Croom Helm
London (1979)*

215 pages. Price £10.50

The exhortation to eat properly—to eschew animal fats, to eat fibre, to make sure we have our vitamins—must impinge on most people in the UK. For general practitioners, the conflicting views of the manufacturers and different parts of our profession make the job of advising patients extremely difficult. Dr Jarrett and his co-authors set out to tackle this problem and are not 'evangelists' for any particular theory of nutrition.

The book is divided into three sections. The first, by Dr Ebrahim, deals with problems of under-nutrition and although relevant mainly to doctors working in the Third World, it does offer some useful information to general practitioners about diseases of malnutrition. The second section, by Dr Jarrett, looks at the problem of food abundance and provides a useful, if rather elementary, review of the dietary factors associated with such conditions as coronary heart disease, diabetes, obesity, cancer, and blood disorders.

Dr Poston's contribution on nutrition and immunity was new to me and was far from elementary. It must present quite a challenge to the students of the life sciences and the intelligent layman for whom the book was intended. I found the citation of research workers' names with no actual references most irritating.

At £10.50 this is an expensive book and it is unlikely to find its way onto many general practitioners' bookshelves.

M. J. WHITFIELD