

Journal, p. 305) the author classifies 'childhood croup' as a reasonable but unnecessary night call.

I have always regarded croup, especially when it starts in the middle of the night, as a potentially serious illness and I always take it seriously. I would prefer that it were classified as a 'genuine emergency'.

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HEALTH ADVICE ON LOCAL RADIO

Sir,
May I, through your columns, advise my colleagues in the College of an ex-

tensive review which I am conducting on local radio and health advice.

I have long been associated with local radio on Merseyside and during the course of nine years have used several broadcasting techniques. My own contribution at present takes the form of a weekly live phone-in medical advice programme on Liverpool's Radio City, broadcasting to North Wales and the North West.

Since March of this year I have been surveying the extent and character of health advice offered by all local radio stations in the United Kingdom and soon the initial catalogue of activities will be published. Successive phases of research will concentrate particularly on aspects of broadcasting techniques related to health advice.

The response of the majority of local radio stations is enthusiastic; several stations are already extremely active

and forward looking about health advice.

In May I presented a paper entitled "An addition to the lay referral system" at the Second International Congress on Patient Counselling and Education in The Hague. This paper placed the local radio doctor and his or her activities in a sociological perspective and I hope it will eventually be published in the *Journal of Patient Counselling and Education*.

If any of my colleagues in the College are interested in my work, I should be glad to hear from them.

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BOOK REVIEWS

AN ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY MEDICAL CARE

W. J. Stephen

Cambridge University Press
Cambridge (1979)
401 pages. Price £12.50

There are no other books available quite like this—a point made by Sir George Godber in his foreword. It is a review of the provision of primary care in four continents and 23 countries written by a general practitioner who practises in a small cathedral city in the West Country. The format comprises a factual description of primary care in the countries concerned, followed by a personal assessment.

In view of the immense amount of information supplied, the span of societies considered, and inevitable difficulties in interpretation, it is remarkable that the text contains so few errors. The personal assessments are pungent and gain force from being placed in a wide historical and social perspective. The author's attitudes are firmly based on the need to provide continuous comprehensive primary care which is accessible and easily available at the time of need. His championship of a generalist family doctor, at least in those countries where the need for elementary public health measures is not paramount, gains force

from international comparisons and the extensive list of references will enable those who are interested in a particular country or system to probe further.

Sir George is right. This is a monumental achievement which leaves this reviewer echoing the author's dedication to his "long suffering wife and children". I hope they will now see more of him—and that all libraries and postgraduate centres, as well as some large practices, will buy a copy of the results of his labours.

R. V. H. JONES

COMMON DISEASES: THEIR NATURE INCIDENCE AND CARE. 2ND EDITION

John Fry

MTP Press
Lancaster (1979)
413 pages. Price £9.95

Here is a truly general practitioner orientated book. As its title suggests, it attempts to combine epidemiological problems in general practice with their clinical features and plan of management.

The book is not large and I was

slightly anxious in view of the vast scope of the subject that it might present as a summary of larger textbooks. I need not have worried—the book was not intended as a source of reference for detailed management of specific illnesses. Instead, the author presents a clear, easy-to-read and stimulating panorama of the everyday work of the general practitioner. The pages are crammed with common sense and useful information.

The fact that this book has reached a second edition proves that it has already established its place in the book market. However, I feel this edition is particularly timely in view of our current efforts towards common sense prescribing and increasing use of preventive measures and social manipulation in illness and health.

The management plans for the common conditions are crystal clear. It is the rather dogmatic style which leads one to question one or two of the therapeutic suggestions and some of the emphasis. For example, in the management of asthma I could not find any mention of aerosol steroid therapy, and in the section on diabetes the discussion on oral hypoglycaemic drugs was too brief to have any validity.

Such criticism is relatively unimportant: the book was not designed to compete with journal-style reference works with continuous updating programmes—its value lies in its ability to