

continues, involves more than 'hygiene'—which is the product of the present National Health Service—but also "education, participation, joy, acceptance, friendship . . ."

I found this book, which is short and easy to read (no long sociological words!) challenging and thought provoking. I thoroughly recommend it to any member of the primary health care team. Trainees in particular may find that it extends their perspectives of general practice.

ROGER PEPPIATT

INTERPRETING THE ELECTROCARDIOGRAM

James S. Fleming

Update Publications Ltd
London (1979)

136 pages (A4 format). Price £6.75

The recently published report of the new charter working group (1979) suggests an extended range of item-of-service payments, including payment for electrocardiograms, and the British Medical Association has recommended financial aid for general practitioners wishing to buy ECG machines. This represents an added incentive for doctors to record their own ECGs, although the number of practices with their own machines is increasing anyway. There remains the problem of interpretation of the tracing—a skill which is not often learnt by potential general practitioners while they are housemen (apart from basic abnormalities). Vocational trainees may not necessarily gain extra experience either.

There is, therefore, a place for a book entitled *ECGs for Beginners*, but its appeal might be limited. Dr Fleming has set out to explain the ECG in detail, without confusing the reader. Basic principles are laid down, and each part of the ECG complex is described individually. There follows an explanation of changes in the ECG due to disease or drugs, and the text is well illustrated with clear diagrams.

At the end of each chapter is a summary of main points and a selection of ECG tracings for interpretation, which illustrate the points mentioned in the chapter.

The text is concise and factual, but sometimes leaves the reader wanting more explanation—in the chapter on axis deviation, for example. The chapters on arrhythmias, however, are excellent. The author appears to assume different levels of knowledge possessed by the reader at different times, but a practice looking for a basic text on

ECGs would find Dr Fleming's book extremely rewarding.

RUSSELL STEELE

FOETUS INTO MAN

J. M. Tanner

Open Books Publishing Ltd
London (1978)

250 pages. Price £4.50

The ability to reduce complicated processes to simple language is much to be admired, and with the modern tendency for large, multi-author textbooks, it is a pleasure (and also a relief!) to have an extensive subject described succinctly by a recognized expert.

Professor Tanner's enviable style provides the reader with clear explanations of the processes of physical growth from conception to maturity, and despite the fact that the 12 chapters amount to only 220 pages, the theme of accurate scientific measurement remains throughout. The scene is simply set, and by use of simple analogies, cellular function is reduced to a level that does not bemuse the reader. For the general practitioner the chapters on puberty and problems of early and late maturers are particularly useful and provide authoritative advice on how to assess children's growth and development. The endocrinology of growth and development of the brain are covered in a mere 30 pages, yet provide all the essential information on these complicated subjects. The concluding chapters deal with the use of growth charts and give valuable advice on predictions of eventual adult height.

Of particular importance to all doctors and nurses working with children is the simple description of accurate methods of measuring height and weight. Although the writer hints that weight has come to have a disproportionate importance to many people, he makes no suggestions about limiting the amount of ritual weighing performed in well baby clinics.

My only criticism was of the tendency to refer the reader to other parts of the book, but this is probably inevitable when discussing a subject where so many different parts and functions of the body are involved. I got bogged down in some of the intricacies of measurement of decimal age but this may have been a reflection of my own mathematical inadequacy.

Professor Tanner's book will interest all general practitioners who have a special interest in children. They will find it to be easily handled and readily shared with nursing colleagues.

D. J. G. BAIN

LONDON PRIDE—THE STORY OF A VOLUNTARY HOSPITAL

A. E. Clark-Kennedy

Hutchinson Bentham Ltd
London (1979)

254 pages. Price £3.50

If my arithmetic is right, there can be few doctors under the age of 50 who ever studied or worked in a voluntary hospital. To those of us who did, this elegant history of the London Hospital, from its foundation at the Feathers Tavern in Cheapside in 1740 to its takeover by the state in 1948, is a delightful trip into nostalgia. To our younger colleagues the journey will be so strange as to seem almost archaeological, but posterity demands that such a history should have been written so that we may judge what was gained—and what lost—on 5 July 1948.

The author naturally writes of his own hospital, of which he was Dean of the Medical School, but the pattern was the same for all the voluntary hospitals—only the lore, the legend, and the family traditions were different.

Dr Clark-Kennedy's biography of his *alma mater* is as unbiased as filial piety could permit. It is also detailed, meticulously researched, and contains many pictures and photographs of domestic historical interest, and for these reasons must obviously attract greater attention from 'old Londoners' than from those who owe allegiance elsewhere; but with this well written book we now have coverage of that long period from the dissolution of the monasteries to the 'appointed day' in 1948—a long and honourable stint in which medical *caritas* flowered as it is unlikely ever to flower again.

JOHN MILES

TODAY'S TREATMENT/3

British Medical Journal

British Medical Association
London (1979)

294 pages. Price £5.50

The third volume in the series *Today's Treatment* consists, like its predecessors, of articles originally published in the *British Medical Journal* covering diseases of the respiratory system, diseases of the urinary system, and the use of antibiotics.

The first section covers the main topics in respiratory disease but in an uneven manner. There is a great

variation between the contributions; Dr Sterling's contribution on chronic bronchitis and emphysema and Dr Tattersall's on asthma are both well written and helpful to the general practitioner. They offer a logical approach to these everyday problems in contrast with the rather technical summary of respiratory failure by Dr Brewis and the confined view of bronchiectasis and cystic fibrosis shown by Dr Hodson, who does not seem to have heard of general practitioners, and has little new to offer the specialist.

Diseases of the urinary system are dealt with in 18 articles with the same degree of variation. Incontinence in the elderly sounds an unpromising subject, but Dr Helps has produced a most stimulating and challenging article while Dr Sharpstone draws attention to important considerations in prescribing for patients with renal failure. Some other contributions like that of Professor Kennedy on the management of chronic renal failure are interesting and useful but others are either highly technical, such as that on renal dystrophy by Dr Hosking, or not very well written, like those of Dr Pryor and Mr Stanton.

The last section is disappointing because although the use of antibiotics is of enormous relevance to the general practitioner, only about one third of the articles are of direct value to him.

Today's Treatment is neither easy to read as a textbook nor comprehensive as a reference book: 40 separate articles in 294 pages do not make for a coherent approach, especially when it is not clear to whom the book is directed. Nevertheless, some parts are useful to the general practitioner and the book is well bound (although not hard-backed), well printed, and reasonably priced.

DAVID BRUCE

THE MELANCHOLY MARRIAGE

Mary K. Hinchcliffe, Douglas Hooper, and F. John Roberts

John Wiley & Sons
Chichester (1978)

139 pages. Price £7.50

The alliterative title and the subject matter of this book should arouse the interest of all general practitioners who deal every day with depressive illness and marital problems.

The authors deal with depression in an 'interactional' way; that is, they see the depressed person's behaviour in relationship to the spouse's response.

They regard the depressive response in one spouse as the chief determinant of the marital relationship, and the response of depression to marital therapy is measured by the change effected in this relationship: role behaviour in marriage is determined by a successful gender role and the ability to adapt to 'dependency changes'. Marriage is a social system and the partners have to undergo a change in order to meet each other's needs. The success or failure of the marriage will depend upon their ability to adapt and meet each other's demands and needs. Depressive behaviour is the end result of a process in which the partners' interpersonal resources can no longer deal with the pressure of new emotional demands and role changes.

While the subject matter is of vital importance to general practitioners, the book has obviously not been written for them. The language—or, dare I say, jargon—is such that it took me approximately four readings of each chapter before I could understand what it was about. I am still puzzled by the following sentence: "In order to understand the ongoing dynamics of the interaction we are striving to find a means whereby we can freeze an interactive event and translate its communicative significance in a frame by frame analysis of its sequence and transpose this information into a meaningful dialogue."

Like so many books on psychiatry and psychology, this book also quotes freely from those great communicators of human experience, the poets, such as Coleridge and T. S. Eliot—as if to show how much more poignantly the poets can illuminate the points that are made.

For all the difficulties posed by the language, the book is well worth reading for the novel view it takes of depression—the ultimate in private distress—as having an *interpersonal* nature, and for its application of this view in the therapeutic approach.

KATIE SCHÖPFLIN

THE BMA BOOK OF EXECUTIVE HEALTH

13 authors

Times Books, in association with
the British Medical Association:
Family Doctor Publications (1979)

192 pages. Price £4.95

I must admit that the word 'executive' irritates me immensely. Colour supplements regularly advertise such goods as 'executive' clocks, 'executive' cases, and 'executive' toys. These wares are usually

pretentious and overpriced, aimed at a group of people who wish they were executives but aren't.

The BMA Book of Executive Health is certainly not pretentious nor is it expensive. However, I still wonder just exactly who it is intended for. Will it become the next status symbol in the boardroom? It is essentially a guide to the occupational hazards of being an executive. Clearly written, it summarizes current thoughts on the aetiology and avoidance of all the predictable ailments, concentrating mainly on the problems of heart disease and stress. Whilst we may not agree with all the views expressed, there is much that will help, and little that will do harm.

Indeed, the book contains a great deal of simple and sensible advice, though I wonder if a 'top person' really needs to be told to brush his teeth up and down (p. 95), that the decision on whether to go to work with a cold depends on how he feels (p. 19), or that belching can be cured by putting a cork between his teeth (p. 102)!

The book is very readable and well laid out, with characteristically excellent cartoons by Calman—including one that seems rather too close to the bone: a doctor is seen to be lecturing a patient with the words ". . . and stop reading those books on health!"

Therein lies the problem about all books of medical advice written for laymen: the very person who most needs advice is the one most unlikely to read it—or, if he does, to follow the advice. I cannot visualize the 19-stone, heavy-smoking executive lapping up this book—it is far more likely to be read by the slim jogger, who is unlikely to gain much benefit.

The doctor who finds a way of making the unfit and disinterested take notice will surely go down in history.

DAVID HASLAM

AIDS AND ADAPTIONS

Ursula Keeble

Occasional Papers on Social
Administration No. 62
Bedford Square Press
London (1979)

320 pages. Price £5.95

Disabled and crippled patients need aids of varying complexity to ease their difficult lives, but one of the problems about providing these lies in the long delays over delivery of new ones or modifications of old.

Ursula Keeble reports on a study into the provision of aids to discover where it is deficient. The study was carried out in