

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