
BOOK REVIEWS

COMPENDIUM OF HEALTH STATISTICS. 3RD EDITION

*Office of Health Economics
London (1979)*

The 1979 edition of the Office of Health Economics' *Compendium of Health Statistics* has recently been published.

Its stated aim is to provide a comprehensive statistical analysis of the working of the National Health Service, and it does this by dividing its figures into six main sections:

1. The cost of the National Health Service.
2. National Health Service staff.
3. Hospital Services.
4. Family Practitioner Services.
5. Mortality.
6. Morbidity.

This is a reference book of importance; in addition to large numbers of tables there are a series of clearly presented figures including many graphs which highlight various general trends in the National Health Service. It can be warmly recommended for general practice sections of postgraduate medical centre libraries.

D. J. PEREIRA GRAY

THE NEW HEALTH PRACTITIONERS IN AMERICA

B. L. E. C. Reedy

*King Edward's Hospital Fund
London (1978)
79 pages*

Since the mid-1960s there has been a gradual increase in the number of nurses who are employed by a general practitioner to work with him primarily in his practice premises. These nurses are distinct from local authority district nurses and are known by a variety of names, of which the 'practice nurse' and the 'treatment room nurse' or 'sister' seem to be the most common.

The author of this short publication has been much involved in the evolution of this new nursing role and has already written many papers on the subject. In this one he reviews the development of the 'nurse practitioner' and the 'physician's assistant' in the USA and compares it with the development of the practice nurse in Britain. His conclusion is that while there is no place for the physician's assistant in British general

practice, the extended role of the nurse is of vital importance in the primary health care team.

Those interested in the future role of the practice nurse would find this short publication of value.

K. J. BOLDEN

TREAT YOURSELF TO SEX: A GUIDE TO GOOD LOVING

Paul Brown and Carolyn Faulder

*Penguin
Harmondsworth (1980)
Price 95p*

Thirty years ago, in my youth, books about sex were mostly concerned with physiology, much of it wrong, and athletics, much of it at Olympic standards. Like advertisements for chest expanders and electrolysis in the back pages of adult comics, they seemed to exhort us to become supermen and superwomen who could conquer the commanding heights of the sexual passes. The new sexual literature, by and large, is a great deal better than that. Today, writings about sex seem to have more in common with the cookery book than with either the medical or the military manual. They offer enjoyment rather than success, and experience rather than mastery. *Treat Yourself to Sex* is one of the best books of its kind that I have read.

Published by Penguin under the aegis of the National Marriage Guidance Council, it is written for people who want to enhance the quality of their sexual lives or are looking for answers to sexual difficulties. The writing is easy and unself-conscious, which in itself encourages the reader to accept his or her own sexual feelings as wholesome and good. In a series of 'sex-pieces' the reader is shown how first to explore and stimulate his or her own body and then the body of the partner. Based on the work of Masters and Johnston, the graded sex-pieces begin by removing the anxiety of having intercourse until the confidence of the lovers in themselves and each other has been established. Later sex-pieces deal with particular problems like premature ejaculation or an absence of female orgasm.

Although the book is intended primarily for self-help, the reader is advised when it may be prudent to look for help elsewhere, for example from a general practitioner or a marriage guid-

ance counsellor. If the general practitioner is to be equipped to help his patient, he will need to be familiar with the approach and techniques described in this book.

So many conflicts seem to be resolved by the authors. In the writing the conflict between clinical jargon and the self-conscious use of four letter words is avoided with elegance. The conflict between behavioural and dynamic psychology disappears because the authors are able to relate the physiology of sexual response to the reach of the reader's imaginations and the shackles of past experiences. Even the raucous voice of sexual politics is stilled.

This is a book which should be read by all doctors and others concerned with people who come to them because of sexual difficulties, and I shall certainly be recommending it to many of my patients in the future.

MARSHALL MARINKER

STUDIES IN DRUG UTILIZATION 1979

*World Health Organization
Regional Office for Europe
Copenhagen (1980)*

184 pages. Price £7.00

During the past century the development of more effective drugs has brought both dramatic improvements in health care and, because of the complexity of their actions, wanted and unwanted, the need for more careful evaluation of their use and effects. The physician needs more information to use them wisely: the public needs to be satisfied that safety and cost-effectiveness are being carefully monitored.

The remarkable differences in prescribing habits between doctors in European countries led to the formation by the WHO of the Drug Utilization Research Group in which at least 14 countries are now participating. In 1976 the Group proposed that WHO should sponsor a publication on guidelines for performing basic drug utilization studies. The present volume is the outcome.

Chapter 1, by Professor Owen Wade, and chapter 2, by a group of Norwegian workers, discuss the background to such studies and the methodological problems that arise, but the major part of the book is devoted to descriptions of the national sources of available information and the way in which such in-