
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-

formation has been used in individual countries. The chapters on data collection in England and Scotland, and the classic work of Wade, McDevitt and others in Northern Ireland remind us that the NHS has provided a unique data base for such studies which is, however, not without its problems. An interesting contribution by Patterson describes the use of prescribing data, analysis, and feedback as an operational research test in general practice.

Drug utilization is defined in the introduction to the book as follows: "The marketing, distribution, prescription and use of drugs in a society, with special emphasis on the resulting medical, social and economic consequences." To those in the profession (and they are rapidly increasing) who are concerned about these problems, this collection of papers will provide much useful background material and stimulus for the future. To those leaders of pressure groups who are ever ready to condemn what they believe to be the professionals' lack of interest in the darker aspects of the tools of their trade, this book may serve, should they ever read it, as some slight corrective.

M. J. LINNETT

WALES AND MEDICINE

A source list for printed books and papers showing the history of medicine in relation to Wales and Welshmen

John Cule

National Library of Wales
Aberystwyth (1980)

229 pages. Price £7.50
(£4.00 paperback)

John Cule's first book bearing the same title, which he edited and published in 1975, consisted of a miscellany of medico-historical essays based on papers read by delegates at the ninth British Congress on the History of Medicine held at Swansea and Cardiff (1973).

The new volume is a comprehensive and valuable source list comprising nearly 3,000 entries of medical works with Welsh connections dating from earliest times. Catalogued with copious cross-references are the scientific and literary writings of Welsh medical men, books about medicine in Wales and the Border, and books on medicine in Welsh. Although items by Welshmen and their descendants predominate, the scope of the book is such that important works by Englishmen are also included for completeness. References to veteri-

ary medicine, pharmacy, domestic, and folk medicine are given rightful recognition. Literary pieces with medical content are also noted. An appendix updates and complements the whole with books and papers on Welsh medical history, philosophy, biography, and other kindred topics.

John Cule's publication serves primarily, and succeeds admirably, as a medico-historical source book, but the diversity of doctors' activities embraces a wider canvas than that of medical science. The mystical poetry of Henry Vaughan, the geology of Henry Hicks, the linguistic investigations of Siôn Dafydd Rees, Whitlock Nicholl, and James Cowles Prichard offer a sharp contrast to the actuarial enquiries of William Morgan, the pharmaceutical researches of William Lewis, the pioneer cardiology of Sir Thomas Lewis, and the inventive orthopaedics of Huw Owen Thomas and Sir Robert Jones. The Welsh American references include John Jones, John Morgan, and Thomas Cadwalader. Apart from popular farriery books, veterinary science gains stature through the writings of the namesake professors, William Williams—father and son. Latin, Italian, and French works also appear in the source list.

An eminent medical historian, the author is Lecturer in the History of Medicine at the Welsh National School of Medicine. His source-book, which must be regarded as a classic, is a 'must' for MA and MD aspirants, and for consultants and general practitioners who are frequently invited to write articles, teach, and deliver lectures and orations.

PETER H. THOMAS

A COLOUR ATLAS OF DIABETES

Arnold Bloom and John Ireland

Wolfe Medical Publications
London (1980)

119 pages. Price £15

Two very distinguished physicians, both with an enviable reputation in the field of diabetes, have collaborated to produce this excellent book.

Dr Arnold Bloom has recently retired from the Whittington Hospital but happily remains Chairman of the British Diabetic Association, and Dr John Ireland has long been active in the Scientific Section of the Association and has worked extensively on the effect of diabetes on the kidney.

In their preface the authors rightly point out that the book is not intended

as a manual of instruction on the management of diabetes but claim to provide a graphic account of the histological and clinical manifestations of the disease. In this, they have most certainly succeeded.

In 10 chapters they deal with the history and aetiology of the disease and of its effect on the pancreas, the liver, pregnancy, and offspring, the vascular system and the feet, skin, the nervous system, the eye, and the renal system.

Each chapter begins with a brief but pertinent text and is followed by a comprehensive series of histological and clinical photographs each bearing a suitable description.

The Wolfe Medical Texts have deservedly gained a high reputation for the standard of their illustrations and this work is no exception.

The surveillance of chronic disease is assuming an ever-increasing importance in general practice and diabetes with its multitude of complications provides a formidable challenge. This book with its wealth of clinical material will help the general practitioner meet the challenge. That it does not deal with treatment in no way detracts from its merit for there are many suitable and complementary works which do this.

The book should certainly be in every postgraduate centre library and I think it would be a worthwhile investment for those practices with teaching responsibilities and for those who prefer to manage their own diabetic patients.

C. WAINE

NURSING IN THE COMMUNITY

The Queen's Nursing Institute
57 Lower Belgrave Street, London
SW1W 0LR (Revised 1979)

32 pages.

Although the Queen's Nursing Institute has produced this booklet primarily for the guidance of nurses working in the community, much of the information it contains is of interest to members of other disciplines.

Short chapters discuss topics which include the essentials of district nursing care, the control of infection, injection procedures, equipment, care of the dying and bereaved, records, and the nurse and the law.

It is written in plain English with an uncluttered text. There are few general practitioners who, after reading it, would not have a better understanding of the role and activities of the community nurses attached to their practices. Highly recommended for the prac-