

The report discusses the reasons for pregnancy in schoolgirls and makes suggestions on prevention aimed particularly at health education programmes in schools. The importance of adequate health care during pregnancy is stressed and mention is made of the primary care team. Social and educational aspects of pregnancy in schoolgirls are dealt with in depth and suggestions are made to improve their situation. The welfare of the child and father are considered and there is a complex legal argument to define the rights of mother, child and father.

It appears that evidence was not submitted to the Working Party by the Royal College of General Practitioners, although both the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Royal College of Psychiatrists did so. This may explain the small role afforded the family doctor in this report despite obvious involvement in the care of the pregnant schoolgirl, her infant and family and in the provision of contraception. Failure to consider the general practitioner's contribution unbalances an otherwise useful document in which all the available evidence on schoolgirl pregnancy is drawn together. Researchers and general practitioners

with a special interest will find this report a valuable source although its complexity and length will limit its more general appeal.

A. HUTCHINSON

YOUR CHILD'S TEETH. A PARENT'S GUIDE TO MAKING AND KEEPING THEM PERFECT

Stephen J. Moss

Penguin Books
Harmondsworth (1980)
156 pages. Price £1.25

Dentistry is not a subject that most general practitioners know much about. Nevertheless, the long waiting lists for dental treatment in many parts of the country often mean that patients seek advice from their family doctor in the meantime. The appallingly ill-funded, and therefore seldom offered, state of NHS preventive dentistry in the UK should perhaps make members of the primary health care team more conscious of the advice and help they can offer patients.

To this end, this is a magnificent

book that could be recommended to any parent. Its title is self-explanatory, and its author, who is Professor and Chairman of Dentistry for Children at New York University, writes entertainingly, clearly, and enthusiastically. The book is easy to read and full of clear, practical and sensible advice. I am not in a position to debate the finer points of any scientific theories that he quotes but, in general, common sense advice is the order of the day.

Although the author is American, he does discuss fully the provision of NHS services, though I doubt whether he is aware how difficult it is for the average patient to find a kind, gentle, NHS dentist who practises prevention, is good with children, and does not have a massive waiting list. His advice to find such a dentist is of course quite right, but barely practicable.

My only other doubt is common to all books on health. Will the people who need them be the people who buy them?

I am delighted to have read this book. I only hope that in 50 years' time my children will flash a smile of unblemished teeth and be glad I read it too.

DAVID HASLAM

REPORT

The General Practitioner and Social Worker Workshop, Manchester, 28-30 March 1979

THE theme of the conference was dependence on alcohol and prescribed drugs. The first speaker was Dr Alex Theodossiadis, consultant psychiatrist, Manchester, who opened the conference with a general discussion of biological and psychological dependency.

Alcoholism

Mr Stan Shaw, Co-Director of the Detoxification Evaluation Project at the Institute of Psychiatry, spoke on early identification of alcohol problems. He explained that it is particularly difficult to identify alcoholism because its symptoms, almost without excep-

tion, can have other organic causes. However, he outlined a range of illnesses and social difficulties which are associated with alcoholism and which, if present, can lead to a diagnosis.

Mrs Elizabeth Broderick, Director of the Greater Manchester Council on Alcoholism, described the work of her organization. She stressed the importance of offering an appointment to clients on the same or the following day after they approach or are referred to the Council. If this is not done the client may lose the motivation for treatment. She discussed the reasons leading to referral and the help which can be offered to the families of alcoholics even when the patient has refused treatment for him or herself.

Brian Hore, consultant psychiatrist and Director of the Alcoholic Unit at the Withington Hospital, Man-

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chester, discussed different approaches to treatment and the fact that alcoholism is seen sometimes as a medical and sometimes as a moral issue. He distinguished between addiction and a drinking problem and defined the dependent drinker as someone who cannot consistently control his drinking over a sustained period. He suggested that it may be better to aim at controlling a patient's intake rather than complete abstinence. Dr Hore said that in the UK there are 20 alcoholic treatment units, residential hostels and detoxification centres for habitual drunken offenders, but that a great deal of the responsibility for supporting the alcoholic and his or her family must still lie with the general practitioner and social worker. The key concept for these workers should be intervention, not treatment.

Drug dependency

Dr Philip Golding, a general practitioner in Bristol, gave a paper concerning dependency on prescribed psychotropic drugs, a topic into which he is currently doing research. Using survey results, he highlighted the fact that we live in a drug-oriented society. He then outlined those aspects of the doctor/patient consultation which usually lead to a prescription being given. These include public expectation, time, drug company advertising, the nature of the patient/practitioner transaction and the doctor wanting to be liked by his patients. Dr Golding then explained some of the problems which can be caused by consultations of this type. These include the possibility of missing underlying organic or depressive illness, repeat prescriptions, the cost to the patient's health and to the doctor's reputation, the cost of the drugs themselves and the undermining of the patient's own ability to cope with stress. The ultimate problem is the risk of dependency.

Dr Tony Clift, a general practitioner in Middleton with an MD in sleep disorders, spoke on reducing dependency on sleeping tablets. He discussed the need to eliminate organic or psychiatric illness before considering psychological factors as the cause of sleeplessness. He then explored the types of life event which may precede or cause neurotic illness and the factors which can predispose someone to drug dependency. Finally, Dr Clift described the effect of having a social worker attached to his practice. He was able to show that the rate of reduction in drug taking in patients suffering from anxiety and depression was significantly greater over a 16-week period for those seeing the social worker than for those who did not do so.

The AGM of the General Practitioner and Social Worker Workshop was held at the end of the conference session on the Saturday afternoon. The conference closed with a discussion led by Dr Theodossiadis, Dr Golding and Dr Hore, in which conference participants raised a range of practical issues relating to general practice and social work with dependent patients and clients.