

I see *A Fortunate Man* as a bridge—a bridge between a novel and a textbook, between the art and science of general practice, between trainees seeking to acquire the role and privilege of a family

doctor, and those who have already attained it; moreover, the fact that this beautifully written study of a doctor was created by two laymen makes it also a bridge between doctors and patients.

*A Fortunate Man—The Story of a Country Doctor* by John Berger and Jean Mohr was first published by Allen Lane in 1967 and is now published by The Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative, £1.25, 188 pages.

## NEW BOOKS

### THE MEDICAL ANNUAL

Ronald Bodley Scott and James Fisher (Eds.)

John Wright and Sons  
Bristol (1981)

311 pages. Price £15.00

*The Medical Annual*, now in its ninety-ninth year of publication, remains an invaluable source of information about the growing points in medicine and should be read by every general practitioner.

From such a plethora of excellent authoritative reviews, it is almost invidious to select any for particular mention. Dr Keith Ball's article emphasizes the importance of health education in the prevention of coronary heart disease, a theme echoed in Dr Pereira Gray's chapter about general practice, and underlines the influence of the general practitioner as health educator.

Other topics, among many likely to be of interest to general practitioners, include 'non-ulcer dyspepsia', the irritable colon, the early detection of large-bowel cancer, captopril, hirsutism and the management of patients with acute cholecystitis or stasis leg ulcers.

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### TREAT OBESITY SERIOUSLY

J. S. Garrow

Churchill Livingstone  
Edinburgh (1981)

245 pages. Price £10.00

Dr Garrow presents this work as a clinical manual for anyone involved in the management of overweight patients. His style is lean but not terse: much information and some quite difficult concepts are presented with admirable clarity.

The introductory chapters assess the risks of overweight, and the benefits

expected from reduction. Two useful graphs show a simple grading of obese subjects, and the time (lengthier than most dieters anticipate) from a particular grade of overweight back to normality. Further chapters contain management plans for the four grades of obesity. For grade 3 (one or two in every general practitioner's list) the author discusses the possibilities of a three-pints-of-milk diet, dental wiring and bypass surgery. At the other end of the range, grade 0 includes two types familiar to the family doctor: the borderline anorexic who is statistically slim but feels horribly fat, and the 'perpetual dieter' managing to retain normal weight by a dieting effort unrecognized by most of us. Both these types of patient require our sympathy and support. In between lie grades 1 and 2 for whom such strategies are discussed as anorectic drugs (not greatly favoured) and the professionally led slimming group, which seems to be our best hope.

Dr Garrow heads the Northwick Park Nutrition Research Group, so it is no surprise to find arguments well based on thermodynamic logic. However, the all-important behavioural aspects of weight reduction are given equal place. Particularly useful are the 10 questions by which expectations and motivation are assessed.

A useful and authoritative work which deserves its place in the postgraduate centre and surgery library.

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### LECTURE NOTES ON RESPIRATORY DISEASE. 2nd EDITION

R. A. L. Brewis

Blackwell Scientific Publications  
Oxford (1980)

312 pages. Price £6.25

The preface to this book indicates that it was written for undergraduates and candidates for the MRCP examination. It achieves this aim much better than most other concise textbooks of respiratory disease. It is clearly written and readable and it contains excellent illustrations of typical clinical features—for instance, a 'pigeon chest' and a 'pink puffer'.

Is this a book which general practitioners should be recommended to read? Indeed, is there any textbook of disorders of the respiratory system (not merely of the lungs) which meets the needs of general practitioners, for whom these assume such importance? The answer to the first question is a qualified 'yes' and to the second, an emphatic 'no'.

Several parts of this book would be valuable to general practitioners, especially the sections on history-taking and examination and those chapters which describe uncommon diseases, about which general practitioners should nevertheless have some knowledge. On the other hand, the book was not written for a general practitioner readership and therefore much of it has little relevance for them. Thus, there is scant guidance on the many less serious respiratory diseases with which general practitioners have to deal every day. Although many of these are minor, self-limiting conditions, often confined to the upper respiratory tract, they constitute one extreme of the continuum of respiratory disease. Traditionally, textbooks have always concentrated on the more serious diseases which represent the other extreme of this continuum, probably because these are the province of hospital specialists and it is they who write the textbooks. So far as I know, the only book about respiratory diseases which was written specially for general practitioners was by Neville Oswald and John Fry (1962). This is no longer available and, anyway, it is very much out of date.

The general practitioner will look in vain for a textbook which deals with both the very common as well as the more serious disorders of the respiratory tract. It should not be thought that the former, just because they are so common, are well understood and, therefore, of little importance. In fact, there is a great deal of ignorance about their aetiology, the role of host factors in individual susceptibility, their relationship to serious respiratory diseases and their long-term effects. All too often, the treatment which we prescribe for them in general practice is based on notions for which there is no scientific basis.

Unfortunately, the overall quality of the book is marred by a few statements which are misleading or factually inac-