

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.

H. W. K. ACHESON
Senior Lecturer in General Practice,
Manchester

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.

TOM KENNEDY
General Practitioner, Longholm

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-

curate. It reveals the author's preconceptions about asthma, which is included in a general section on allergic disorders, implying that the underlying abnormality in asthma is of an allergic nature. However, in many patients with asthma there is no evidence of allergic factors. It is unfortunate that the author dismisses skin tests as being of little value. (Incidentally, intradermal skin tests, one of the two methods which are mentioned, are now recognized to be obsolete since they are both unreliable and potentially dangerous.) I would have liked to see a much fuller exposition of reversible and irreversible airflow obstruction and also a description of the use of measurements of peak expiratory flow, by which the doctor can determine which of these components is predominant in a given patient. In the section on tuberculosis it is stated that streptomycin and PAS are part of standard triple chemotherapy. The former now has only a limited place and the latter is obsolete, the two drugs having been replaced by rifampicin and ethambutol.

It was a pleasure to note that nowhere in this book is reference made to those two widely used and thoroughly misleading terms 'bronchospasm' and 'air entry'. It is high time that all other authors abandoned them.

IAN GREGG
General Practitioner
Kingston-upon-Thames

Reference

Oswald, N. C. & Fry, J. (1962). *Diseases of the Respiratory System*. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications.

SHRIRE'S CLINICAL CARDIOLOGY

E. Chester

John Wright & Sons
Bristol (1981)

344 pages. Price £17.50

This is the fourth edition of a text originally written by Professor Shrire of Capetown, so the previous editions evidently met some need. It is difficult to see what this could have been, except perhaps for preparing for examinations. The current author is Professor of Medicine at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

I read the chapters on history-taking, examination, rheumatic fever, hypertension and hypertensive heart disease, and cor pulmonale. The style is clear but unimaginative. Content is heavily biased toward mechanisms rather than causes,

and the few lines devoted to epidemiological evidence on natural history are glib and inaccurate. Treatment is dealt with so sketchily that it would have been better omitted. Prevention is hardly discussed at all, and certainly not seen as a part of the doctor's remit. The full resources of a teaching hospital are assumed throughout, and there is no discussion of the central problem of applying medical science in the real world of unmet need and limited resource, namely the need for rational priorities. This is a book that need never have been written.

JULIAN TUDOR HART
General Practitioner, Glyncorrwg

CARDIOVASCULAR RISK FACTORS IN CHILDREN

Gerald S. Berenson

Oxford University Press
Oxford (1980)

453 pages. Price £20

The Bogalusa Heart Study was set up in 1972 to investigate the early natural history of atherosclerosis and essential hypertension in about 5,000 children aged up to 14 years in the town of Bogalusa, Louisiana. This book is an account of the objectives, methods and results of this study.

The authors describe how the children were recruited into the study and detail the methods used for anthropometric measurements and for recording blood pressure using a number of different techniques; they also describe the laboratory methods used to measure lipid and lipoprotein fractions.

The book is very detailed, with many tables and grids giving percentile levels for all of the variables. However, one of the most interesting findings in this study is the identification of high-risk children who persistently exhibit multiple risk factor variables at high levels.

The authors remind us that if today's children grow up like their parents, 20 to 30 per cent will develop hypertension and about 50 per cent will die from hypertension and atherosclerosis. If it can be shown that high risk is detectable in childhood, we will have to reconsider our strategy for preventing ischaemic heart disease.

Those with an interest in cardiovascular epidemiology will find this book of great value, but it is unlikely to be attractive to the majority of general practitioners.

M. C. STONE
General Practitioner, Leigh

ABC OF EAR, NOSE AND THROAT, 51 pages, price £3.50; **ABC OF HYPERTENSION**, 44 pages, price £3.50; **TODAY'S TREATMENT 4**, 178 pages, price £4.50

British Medical Association
London (1981)

It is very difficult to know which doctors are expected to profit from the 'ABC' written by an ENT surgeon (apparently unaided by a general practitioner) when the same page has an illustration of an ice pack placed on the bridge of the nose and another of a surgical approach to the anterior ethmoid artery. The hypertension collection is better, but the subject is well covered in other recent books of reference and revision, to say nothing of the excellent audiovisuals now available. The articles, originally of some value for hints during the week of issue, have not survived well as a booklet.

Today's Treatment 4 collects articles from three other series published in the *BMJ*; these have survived better. The section on anaesthesia is perhaps of marginal value to the general practitioner, but the other two, on drug induced diseases and clinical pharmacology, are interestingly written and informative. We all write thousands of prescriptions every year and clinical pharmacology is an important subject. This book contains some very useful reminders of the disorders, and sometimes disasters, we may cause by drugs. The inevitable conciseness of the excellent new *BNF* is filled out by these articles; it can be recommended to general practitioners as a book to dip into, as a source for presentation of 'Journal Club' items to peer groups, and for use in training. It serves a need well and deserves to go into further editions.

D. J. PRICE
General Practitioner
Richmond, Surrey

New editions

Davies, D. M. (ed.) *Textbook of Adverse Drug Reactions*. 2nd edition. £28.00, hardback. 693 pages.

Garrod, L. P., Lambert, H. P. & O'Grady. *Antibiotic and Chemotherapy*. 5th edition. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone. £18.50, hardback. 514 pages.

Hartwig Heyck, H. *Headache and Facial Pain*. First English edition. Chicago: Year Book Medical Publishers. £9.75, paperback. 274 pages.

Myles, M. F. *Textbook for Midwives*. 4th edition. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone. £16.00, hardback; £12.00, paperback. 890 pages.