

BOOKS FOR PATIENTS

THE BILLINGS METHOD

Evelyn Billings and Ann Westmore
 Penguin Books
 Harmondsworth (1981)
 254 pages. Price £5.95

There is now perfectly good evidence that the condition of the cervical mucus can indicate reliably when a woman is likely to conceive and when not. The method costs nothing, uses no apparatus and relies on no more than common-sense observation. However, this book is very detailed and cannot be recommended to the majority of people; presumably the authors have prepared small, very cheap booklets for wide distribution, but there is no reference to their availability here. The address for further information in Britain is The Billings Method Centre, 211 Brighton Road, Croydon, Surrey.

CHURCHILL LIVINGSTONE PATIENT HANDBOOKS

Churchill Livingstone
 Edinburgh (1981)

A new series of small (7¼" by 4½") paperbacks, all costing £1.95 or less. They are attractively produced, with plentiful illustrations and drawings that are not usually over-technical. They are mostly an excellent balance of realism with optimism and good sense. The titles so far are:

You—After Childbirth

(Julie McKenna, Margaret Polden and Margaret Williams, 75p);

Epilepsy Explained
 (John and Mary Laidlaw, £1.00);
Help for Bedwetting
 (Roy Meadow, 95p);
Your Child's Development in the First Five Years
 (R. S. Illingworth, £1.20);
The Diabetic Child
 (J. W. Farquhar, £1.30);
Infections—and Immunisation of Your Child
 (R. S. Illingworth, £1.20);
High Blood Pressure
 (P. J. Lewis, £1.00);
All About Heart Attacks
 (J. R. Hampton, £1.25);
Diabetes: A Practical Guide for Patients on Insulin
 (R. Tattersall, £1.25);
Diabetes in Your Teens
 (J. W. Farquhar, £1.95).

All can be strongly recommended, except the one by Professor Illingworth on infections, which seems divorced from the real needs and habits of patients outside a teaching hospital. For example, the only advice given for the treatment of chicken pox is as follows: "No treatment is necessary for chicken pox. Calamine lotion may provide some relief for the itching, but it is not normally given. There is no point in giving medicine, for it will not help. There is no point in keeping the child in bed or even indoors." There are plenty of other books on child care which are less dismissive of ordinary people's anxieties.

CAN'T YOUR CHILD HEAR?

R. D. Freeman, C. F. Carbin and R. J. Boese

Croom Helm
 London (1982)

340 pages. Price £9.95

This is an extremely comprehensive book aimed at professionals as much as

parents. The whole approach of the book (which is written by Canadians) is to provide much more information and discussion than the majority of patients in this country are used to being given. It is a very good thing that such a detailed book exists, but there are several other texts which most British parents would want to look at first (from the British Deaf Association, 38 Victoria Place, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA1 1HU). It would be difficult, however, to find one which conveys so well the feeling of hopefulness and loving concern for handicapped children.

PEARS ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF CHILD HEALTH

A. Stanway and P. Stanway

Sphere Books
 London (1981)

234 pages. Price £4.95

Much more information and much less overbearing advice than in most books about children. The illustrations are very numerous and most excellent; many are photographs of real people doing real things, but there are still some of the ancient and not particularly helpful variety which show cross-sections of parts of the body. Unreservedly recommended.

THE EPILEPSY HANDBOOK

Shelagh McGovern

Sheldon Press
 London (1982)

104 pages. Price £3.95

Exactly what the title says: no pictures, comprehensive and readable text, but aimed at an intelligent public. An excellent source of information on all aspects of epilepsy.

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