
GENERAL PRACTICE LITERATURE

BOOK REVIEWS

THE FATHER FIGURE

Lorna McKee and Margaret
O'Brien

Tavistock
London (1982)

239 pages. Price £4.95

Most British studies of the family have concentrated on the mother and the mother-child relationship. This book helps to redress the balance by looking afresh at the role of the father. It is written by academic sociologists, psychologists, social historians and lawyers, with 19 pages of references, so it will inevitably only appeal to the more academic general practitioner with an interest in sociology. Most of its 13 chapters are based on separate research projects with titles such as 'The desire to father: reproductive ideologies and involuntary childless men' and 'Fathers' participation in infant care: a critique'. I confess to finding many of them less than interesting, partly because their style and presentation made it difficult to extract the important conclusions and facts.

Two of the articles are worthy of wider readership. First the one entitled 'Lone fatherhood: a problematical status', which is a study of single-parent families headed by a father. The 100,000 such men in Britain are shown to be at risk from the same stresses as their better-known female counterparts. Secondly the article 'Father in the labour ward: medical and lay accounts' could be usefully read by obstetricians, midwives and general practitioners involved in intranatal care.

ROGER PEPIATT
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ENJOYING FOOD ON A RENAL DIET

Marianne Vennegoor (editor)

Published for King's Fund by OUP,
Oxford (1982)

156 pages. Price £8.40

This is a beautifully produced book which is intended to help patients suffer-

ing from chronic renal failure. The text and illustrations are excellent and will improve the appetite even in those on unrestricted diets. The diet of patients suffering from chronic renal failure tends to be rather dull and reading the book has already improved the morale of one of my patients.

GRAHAM BUCKLEY
Journal Editor

OXFORD TEXTBOOK OF MEDICINE

D. J. Weatherall, J. G. C.
Ledingham and D. A. Warrell
(editors)

Oxford University Press (1983)
2,700 pages. (2 volumes) Price £45

The publication of the *Oxford Textbook of Medicine* is a massive achievement. As its editors say in the preface, it is the reincarnation of 'Price', which after 60 years as a major British postgraduate textbook of medicine has been laid to rest by Oxford University Press. The range of medicine is such that the work extends to two large volumes. The list of authors is itself over five pages long, and although there is a distinctly Oxford flavour to the book the contributors are an international group.

The text is clearly presented with numerous black and white illustrations and there is a section of colour plates, the quality of which is excellent. The vast bulk of the book is concerned with diseases rather than ill-health, and a general practitioner may be disappointed in the section on Health and Sickness in the Community because of its epidemiological viewpoint. In the introductory chapter, A. M. Cooke discusses the place and value of textbooks; he recognizes that they form only a small part of medicine but notes also that the physician who practises medicine without a textbook is like a sailor who goes to sea without a chart, while the physician who studies books rather than patients is like a sailor who does not go to sea at all.

The *Oxford Textbook of Medicine* will be an invaluable chart for general practitioners and a landmark in British medicine. General practitioners will want to have access to it in their own libraries or in the postgraduate medical libraries.

E. G. BUCKLEY
Journal Editor

SHORT-TERM PSYCHOTHERAPIES FOR DEPRESSION

John Rush

John Wiley

Chichester (1982)

339 pages. Price £16.00

The authorship of most of this book is North American. As such its field may only be of interest to the British general practitioner who is especially interested in the treatment of psychiatric illness, for the simple reason that primary care across the Atlantic seems more specialized.

The book consists of four pairs of chapters on the foundations and practice of different psychotherapeutic disciplines: behavioural, interpersonal, cognitive and psychodynamic. This meaty centre is sandwiched between an introduction by the editor and a chapter by Anthony Ryle on the cross-fertilization between research and practice in brief psychotherapy. The introduction deals with the diagnosis of depression, and discusses which forms may be treated by psychotherapy and how to select the type of treatment most suitable for a given patient. The chapters on cognitive therapy were the freshest, although the concept of 'interpersonal psychotherapy' which initially seemed old hat, also had a freshness about it. All the chapters have a conclusion section except those on the psychodynamic approach, which is perhaps impossible to summarize.

Anthony Ryle's chapter is the one most appealing to the British primary care scene, with its concepts of dilemma, trap and snag. His goal of treatment of the distressed patient to achieve a change in the terms through which his or her experience is constructed seems a splendid one.

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THE DYING PATIENT

Eric Wilkes (editor)

MTP Press
Lancaster (1982)

336 pages. Price £20.25

The recipe sounds too good to be true. Take the experience, expertise and com-