
MEDICAL LITERATURE

BOOKS REVIEWED

PARTICIPATION IN HEALTH

J. McEwen, C. J. M. Martin
and N. Wilkins

Croom Helm,
London (1983)

264 pages. Price £14.95

The three authors, who represent different interests, have selected topics such as self-help, the women's health movement and education for health to show the influence that wider participation in primary health care is likely to have on medicine in the future. There is a thorough and excellent review of the literature, and a particularly interesting feature of the book is the way in which the authors have incorporated quotations from other works. The end result is a book which, while giving due regard to the doctor and his role, considers other health workers as well. This is a good book, a useful introduction to the subject and worthy of serious study.

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THE NORMAL CHILD (8th edition)

Some Problems of the Early Years and their Treatment

Ronald S. Illingworth

Churchill Livingstone,
Edinburgh (1983)

374 pages. Price £12.00

This edition coincided with the thirtieth anniversary of the first edition of this classic text. A previous review in this Journal described the book as the best of its kind, and this continues to be the case.

There is a new introduction, which emphasizes the importance of 'knowing the normal'. A new chapter entitled 'Bringing the best out of a child' will appeal to all who are concerned with giving guidance to families with young

children. The 'Basis of behaviour' chapter is a good example of the way in which Professor Illingworth can authoritatively review a complex subject and extract the common sense. His sympathy for mothers who have to bring their children up in difficult social circumstances is apparent, particularly in the section on the annoying characteristics of the developing child.

In my view, this book should be essential reading for anyone who is training to be a general practitioner or a health visitor. It helps to redress the balance in the education of doctors, which is at present so weighted towards study of the pathological and abnormal.

E.G.B.

CLINICAL EPIDEMIOLOGY: THE ESSENTIALS

R. H. Fletcher, S. W. Fletcher and
E. H. Wagner

Williams and Wilkins, Baltimore
and London (1982)

224 pages. Price £11.00

Clinical epidemiology has been pronounced, by its exponents, 'a basic science for clinicians'. It consists of a marriage between quantitative concepts long used by epidemiologists in studying disease in populations (frequency, rate, causality, etc.) and decision-making in the individual case (diagnosis, treatment, prognosis, etc.)—the daily fare of clinical medicine. The three authors are academicians with combined training in general medicine and epidemiology. Their intention is to help medical practitioners develop skills for assessing the scientific merit of research upon which clinical decisions are premised. The book is evenly apportioned among 10 central chapters, each dealing with a fundamental focus of clinical research, such as defining abnormality, assessing efficacy of treatments and employing case-control study design to test causal hypotheses. The theme of each chapter is illustrated with an excellent selection of published studies which demonstrate both proper and improper applications of the epidemiological principles under consideration.

For what it sets out to accomplish, *Clinical epidemiology: the essentials* achieves its purpose in an admirable, if textbook-like, fashion. However, from

the point of view of the general practitioner, the book lacks some of the essentials of epidemiology. First, the classic epidemiological phenomena of epidemic, endemic and pandemic occurrence of disease are not addressed. Surely the clinical skills of recognizing, reporting and responding to an epidemic or local outbreak of disease are a critical part of practice in the community? Secondly, the skills for efficiently maintaining and reviewing practice morbidity data, including use of microcomputers, receive no mention. Yet herein lies a prime opportunity for the practitioner both to study critically his own patient population and to contribute to the epidemiological knowledge of common diseases. On these two scores, *Clinical epidemiology* would benefit by extending its scope to take account of the epidemiological work of community-based clinicians such as Will Pickles, John Fry, Julian Tudor Hart and their like.

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HOSPICE CARE Principles and Practice

C. A. Corr and D. M. Corr (editors)

Faber and Faber,
London (1983)

364 pages. Price £4.95 (paperback)

The literature in this field has increased considerably in the last decade, so this book faces stiff competition. Two thirds of the contributions are from North America and do not always reflect the day-to-day problems seen in the UK, and while there are nine chapters by British contributors six have been published previously.

Although all the vital aspects of this branch of medicine are included, one has to search for them. Some of the practical aspects described are not up to date: it is not necessary to prescribe an antiemetic routinely with morphine, and no mention is made of the syringe driver—a convenient means of administering subcutaneous diamorphine, at home or in hospital, when morphine cannot be given orally.