



# BOOK AND VIDEO REVIEW



## THE NEXT GENERATION

**Lives of third world children**  
*Judith Ennew and Brian Milne*  
*Zed Books, London (1990)*  
*226 pages. Price £7.95 (p/b)*

A few years ago, this book might have been considered unnecessary reading for British general practitioners. Sadly, with the growing numbers of adolescents sleeping rough on city streets, and with child abuse never far from the headlines, it has a message for us all.

It is an enormously interesting and readable book written by two Cambridge social anthropologists. They begin by listing the 10 principles in the United Nations declaration of the rights of the child (1959) and in each case describe how reality has sadly failed the good intentions. This year, however, a legally binding document (the convention on the rights of the child) is to be ratified by member states who then commit themselves to implementation. This international treaty covers a surprisingly wide area of children's rights, from basic health and freedom, to protection from exploitation, media responsibility, nursery care and much more.

It is a sad fact that, despite cheap and effective remedies, five million children die from diarrhoea each year and that half the world's children are not immunized. In the second part of the book, the authors give short accounts of life for the child in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America, covering aspects of health and social conditions. Each account is punctuated by vivid short case histories. White, western, middle-class perceptions are questioned, and children in prisons, children in armed combat and child workers are discussed.

Half of the world's population are children and the way society views 'those who are our future' is a fundamental theme throughout the book. This is an important book and I would recommend it to all who are concerned with 'the next generation'.

DOROTHY E LOGIE  
*General practitioner, Melrose, Borders*

## LOCAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

**Is partnership possible?**  
*Michael Bayley, Rosalind Seyd and Alan Tennant*  
*Gower, Aldershot (1989)*  
*196 pages. Price £25.00*

I thoroughly recommend this excellent book, particularly as an introduction for trainees. Newly qualified doctors have rarely been taught anything about community social services, and though most general practitioners eventually get some working knowledge of how these operate in their own areas, this is usually obtained in hand-to-mouth manner and all too often results in ignorance of the help which social workers can give our patients.

As with our own work, this help is often deficient, not because responsible professionals do not care, but because resources are inadequate and objectives are poorly or wrongly defined.

Health economists often assert that resources will always be both finite and less than we need. This book shows the infinite resources available in the people we serve and the communities of which they and we are a part, not as theory but as fumbling practice in a real place. Unlike many texts purporting to cover the same ground, it is entirely free from sociological jargon, admits the great difficulties faced by anyone actually working in the field, and avoids blaming either professionals or target populations for their failures to deliver gallons out of pint pots.

At the 1990 Spring meeting of the Royal College of General Practitioners in Harrogate, there were stalls for three banks but not a single display from a medical bookshop or publisher, a sad fact which tells us something about ourselves. Books are necessary food for imagination. This one could set many practices on new paths entirely.

JULIAN TUDOR HART  
*General practitioner, Glyncorrwg, West Glamorgan*

## SWEET FA

**The autobiography of Alun Peredur Jones who suffers from Friedrich's ataxia an inherited disease**  
*Brynglass, Bromley, Kent (1989)*  
*151 pages. Price £4.00*

Those who read this short autobiography in the hope of discovering what it is really like to suffer from Friedrich's ataxia will perhaps be disappointed. Alun Peredur Jones, who has this inherited disease, demonstrates through his stoicism the essential duality of our existence, the ability of body and soul to say no to one another. His noble and enlightened character is able to separate his buoyant spirit from his frail complaining body. Like Seneca he finds happiness in having succeeded in enduring events the actual enduring of which was very far from pleasant.

Because of his poor vision, the author was unable to write in his native Welsh and so dictated the text to his wife who spoke only English. In general it is a misguided endeavour to write as one speaks; but the text, with its demotic colloquialisms, its Welshness and its naturalness has a style which is original and one that has freely grown from deep within the author. We see, therefore, Alun Peredur Jones and not simply an author.

The story, not surprisingly, is coloured by his experience of living in a remote slate-mining community, Blaenau Ffestiniog, where life is hard and the landscape bleak. Taking this and his incurable disease Jones could have created his own form of bleak Welsh pastoral, thickly streaked by indignation. Instead, happily, we accompany him to lands of sultry sun, Bacardi, strange food and exotic women; an entertaining journey with surprises

galore. There is of course some resentment; the toilet inaccessible to a wheelchair is almost the leitmotiv of the autobiography. He describes in a very direct way, through such practical examples, the real meaning of the word 'handicapped'; something superimposed by society on a person with a disability.

In the forward, Dafydd Ellis Thomas, a member of parliament, and a friend of the author, thanks him for showing a lot of us how to live more normally. For me this was the important message from Alun Peredur Jones and I am grateful to him for sharing some of his life with me.

GWYN HOWELLS  
*General practitioner, Swansea*

#### CLINICAL DERMATOLOGY

*J A A Hunter, J A Savin and M V Dahl*  
*Blackwell, Oxford (1989)*  
*293 pages. Price £17.50*

In recent years considerable advances have been made in the anatomy, physiology and immunology of the skin and they are fundamental to the approach of this book, which provides a thoroughly modern look at dermatology. When the available knowledge about diseases allows, the authors group together those of like cause. Where this cannot be done, the basis of classification shifts to shared physiology, for example, disorders of keratinization, shared anatomy or shared microanatomy. Only as a final option do they use the old concept of grouping together diseases which look alike, as for example macular or papular rashes.

Nothing is better than seeing patients who have skin disease in the company of an expert, but some idea of the disciplined visual skill needed is conveyed in an introductory chapter which defines the terms commonly used in describing the appearance of lesions, both primary and secondary.

The layout of the book makes it a joy to read. There are two columns of text to a page, numerous diagrams and highlighted tables which provide useful summaries of aetiological factors, those diseases which can best be considered together and diagnostic features of some of the diseases being described in the text. These summary tables leave the text free for discussion of the more important items at length. A number of learning points for each chapter are set in a frame and these are clinical aphorisms based on the experience of the authors. At the back of the book details of topical and systemic medication are presented in tables printed on blue pages for rapid recognition. The colour photographs, though small, are numerous and excellent.

Two of the authors are from the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh, and the third from the University of Minnesota. The contents

cater for both British and American readers.

I predict that this textbook will become the most popular in its field with general practitioners, although there may just possibly be too much detail for some medical students. Such an up to date account will satisfy doctors who find the detective work involved in dermatology interesting and will stimulate many who heretofore have found books on the subject merely confusing.

ALEX L BROWN  
*Lecturer in general practice, University of Manchester*

#### NEUROLOGY

##### What shall I do?

*Dafydd Thomas and Bev Daily*  
*Butterworths, London (1989)*  
*115 pages. Price £6.95*

At our district hospital we have four full-time physicians. They have 'an interest' in the heart, the lungs, the gut and diabetes. Neurological disease accounts for the second largest number of deaths nationally, but a neurologist visits our district hospital only once a week. This creates the paradox whereby neurology seems both ubiquitous and remote. In this context general practitioners will welcome a small unpretentious guide to managing neurological problems written by a general practitioner and a neurologist.

Neurologists are sometimes pejoratively compared to pathologists; it is said they have little to offer in helping to solve clinical problems. Dr Thomas' commonsense approach dispels this false belief. His guidance is most useful when symptoms and patients' questions are linked to practical advice. It is less useful when he assumes that general practitioners can elicit neurological signs. Without special training in this skill, most non-neurologists lack the confidence to examine the central nervous system. This reluctance is reinforced by a belief that it is no use trying if you cannot remember any neuroanatomy. This is unfortunate; neurologists managed empirically, before the source of many clinical signs were known, and continue to do so.

As I trained in neurology I gave the book to my trainee to get a second view. He welcomed the easy to read style in which a general practitioner poses questions and a specialist replies. It seems that the publishers are producing a series using this format. My trainee and I used the topics in this book as triggers for a stimulating discussion. Well done Butterworths, Dafydd Thomas and Bev Daily.

LEONE RIDSDALE  
*Senior lecturer in general practice, United Medical and Dental Schools of Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals, London*

## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

### WELSH MRCGP COURSE AT ABERYSTWYTH, DYFED

Tuesday 28th August 1990 to Saturday 1st September 1990

The above Course was instigated by a decision of the Welsh Council of the RCGP and is a residential course in buildings of the University College of Wales where opportunity will be offered for individual and group work in preparation for the written work and vivas of the MRCGP examination. Examiners of the College will be present. Pre-course work will be required. Post-Graduate Education Allowance approval and Section 2 approval have been obtained for those Principals or Trainees for whom it applies.

The cost of the Course is £240 payable at the start of the Course, and a deposit of £50 will be required on confirmation of being offered a place on the Course.

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