

Book Reviews

The Prevention of Cervical Cancer. H. C. McLAREN, M.D., F.R.F.P.S., F.R.C.S., F.R.C.O.G., London, English University Press Ltd., 1963. Pp. v + 134. Price 21s.

A superbly produced, small book by Professor McLaren is no minor event. It is incredible that cytology of the cervix should remain such a disputed method of clinical investigation, when all the evidence points to the fact that with the aid of cytology, carcinoma of the cervix uteri can be diagnosed at a stage when all other clinical manifestations, even to the most experienced doctor, would not arouse a suspicion of its presence. The implication of this is apparently obvious to everybody until one comes up against the question of the general implementation of this technique.

If there are still any doubters and unconverted as to the method, value and importance of cytology in the unsuspected clinical situation of the apparently healthy cervix, then a reading of Professor McLaren's excellent book with its splendidly persuasive diagrams and its racy and direct style cannot fail to convince. It is a must for every general practitioner so that they in turn can knowledgeably demand the facilities of which they are deprived at present in all but eight privileged areas in the United Kingdom. It is a depressing thought that a technique which has shown its value so universally cannot be used by all general practitioners. This method, if employed routinely, could contribute materially to the eradication of invasive carcinoma of the cervix which is still a major killer.

The unanswerable balance sheet is Professor McLaren's word under the title "How many Fish in the Net?" (p. 109) is quite irrefutable and shows up clearly the 1 per 1,000 women who would be found to have frank carcinoma of cervix if a public campaign for preventive cytology was started; the 8 per 1,000 of women who would require follow-up as they have a probable pre-carcinoma *in situ*, and finally the most important group of 4 per 1,000 who might show up with carcinoma *in situ*. Even if some surveys have shown this to be as low as 1.8 per 1,000 women screened, it still is a formidable figure for prevention, corresponding to mass T.B. x-ray screening, and larger than the venereal disease blood test screening of expectant mothers.

These women in their prime, when their family responsibilities are probably greatest, would otherwise be doomed, as surgical and x-ray cure rates have not altered materially and fail to cure 70 per cent of these patients.

It is a serious responsibility for lukewarm protagonists of cytology who
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say that it could be made available but for the fears, neuroses and anxieties such tests would engender in women. These arguments have been disproved long ago (see *Lancet*, Oct. 1958, p. 895-896 and more recently the *British Medical Journal*—Sir Dugald Baird and Dr Elizabeth McGregor). Why must we assume that the women in the United Kingdom are so very different in their reaction from the women of Canada, America, France, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, where cytology is widely accepted without any outcry from the female population?

The shortage of technicians is still to be solved, yet the need to solve it ten years after cytology has been established is a serious reproach on the lack of prevention in our National Health Service.

Professor McLaren's book has the most compelling figures and diagrams to support his missionary preaching, which, is, unfortunately, so very necessary. He does not omit to put the newer technique of colposcopy into the proper perspective.

It is hoped in further editions there will be an appropriate reference to the South-east Scotland Faculty, who in their pilot procedure of taking cervical smears from apparently healthy women had no embarrassing side effects and raised no doctor/patient problems and repercussions.

Chronic Bronchitis—Prevention and Management. Report of a symposium held in London, November 1962. Published by the Chest and Heart Association. Pp. 71. Price 10s. 6d.

The 'English Disease'—heaven knows what effort the medical profession puts into research on bronchitis, and in treating its effects, but after reading this brief report of contributions by a pathologist, five clinicians, a lecturer in industrial health and a psychiatrist, one wonders whether any useful purpose is served. All contributors agree, in the words of Sir Geoffrey Marshall in his foreword, that "important factors (are) climate, air pollution and tobacco"—Society and the general public surely must be made to realize that here we have a disease far beyond the scope and care of the profession alone.

To what depths of platitude are we driven; "Action against chronic bronchitis. In the early stages the patients main need is education. This involves time either with the individual patient or with a group. The cause of the condition must be fully explained. The irritant must be completely eliminated and this, by itself, will lead to a marked improvement in cough and expectoration. Bronchial spasm (and possible allergic factors) must be relieved. Faulty diet and obesity must be strictly rectified." It all sounds so easy, but to the individual patient, the concern of the general practitioner it will usually mean precisely nothing.

The main blast of common sense comes from Dr Andrew Meiklejohn of Glasgow on 'Industrial Rehabilitation.' He draws attention to what he calls the 'intermediate years' i.e. between slight and advanced disability. "Many patients recognize their handicaps and make their own adjustments at work. I would plead with all doctors to be very circum-