

Medical Surveys and Clinical Trials. Second edition. Edited by Prof. L. J. WITTS, M.A., M.D., SC.D., F.R.C.P. London. Oxford University Press. 1964. Pp. xi+367. Price 42s.

The general practitioner who wishes to advance his knowledge of epidemiology and to improve his methods of work has few textbooks to which he can turn for guidance either on general principles or on matters of precise detail. The first edition of this book served many of us well, and the second edition is likely to be even more widely welcomed. Principles of epidemiological study do not vary between hospital and 'field' practice and though many of the techniques described were worked out in the hospital context their adaptation to practice circumstances is not difficult. The kinds of study with which we are becoming increasingly familiar, prevalence surveys, retrospective and prospective studies, follow-up methods and the like, are all discussed by acknowledged experts. Practice studies often involve the work of a number of observers and the chapter on group research, with a full bibliography on observer error and variation, is of particular value.

Though the College has not concerned itself with the conduct of therapeutic trials the section on this subject will be widely read, as will that on operational research with which we are likely to become increasingly interested. The value of operational studies of the optimal use of scarce commodities, first employed in World War II, will be great in proportion to our need to provide medical care effectively and with diminished resources in medical manpower. The second part of the book considers certain applications of the methods described in the first. Genetic studies are now practicable with a precision undreamed of a few years ago and family practice offers a wide field for studies of familial disorders. Nutrition, chest and cardiovascular diseases, the arthritides and cancer have all provided subjects for study or actual investigation by the College at some time or another and a chapter on mental illness contains much that is relevant to some of the College's recent work. This is not a book written "for students and general practitioners". It is intended for postgraduate clinical research workers and many are to be found in general practice today, a field in which the serious study of epidemiology has limitless opportunities both at home and overseas.

Research Reviews. 1963-64. Edited by DR D. J. E. L. CARRICK. London. Medical News Ltd. 1964. Pp. x+230. 21s.

This volume contains articles summarizing recent progress in research in many fields, all of which have appeared week by week in *Medical News*. Each monograph is deliberately written in non-technical terms but is authoritative and sufficiently detailed to provide a stimulus to further reading. Some of the reviews are quite brief, but all are lucid and well presented. They do not only report exotica, but they describe also progress in matters which are of every-day concern to the doctor in practice. An account of analgesia in childbirth is followed by another on the immunological diagnosis of pregnancy, and elsewhere in the book cystic fibrosis of the pancreas is followed by the "ageing process in bone". The articles which are grouped under broad general headings are neither so short as

to be trivial nor so long as to be tedious and this happy balance is evenly preserved throughout.

Consideration of the commonplace is less likely to stimulate the imagination and every now and then an off-beat chapter achieves just this. Parathyroid hormones, the sustenance of spacemen and fluid equilibrium in the camel are all described thoughtfully and sometimes provocatively.

This is a bedside book for the research-minded doctor into which he may dip rewardingly. When he has completed it he will have the satisfied feeling that he has attended an extremely comprehensive postgraduate course. Sometimes he may feel frustrated, though, for he is not helped to follow a newly-aroused interest, through references to other work. The value of each paper would be enhanced if it were followed by a short guide to further reading, prepared by the author of the paper.

The second volume in a series, this edition is more robustly constructed than its predecessor. This is as well for it is destined to be much read.

The Maltreatment Syndrome in Children. VINCENT J. FONTANA, M.D., F.A.A.P. Springfield, Illinois, U.S.A. Charles C. Thomas. 1964. Pp. xv+67. Price \$5.00.

This book was published shortly before a paper in the *British Medical Journal* on the Battered Baby Syndrome (Brit. med. J. 1963, 2, 1558-61) drew our attention to the condition in this country. The trial of a man for the murder of his two very young children by repeatedly inflicted injuries has shocked many of us. The earlier death was certified as due to accident and suspicion directed to it only when the second occurred some months later. It is apparent that many cases pass unrecognized as results of parental cruelty for the history of accident is supplied when doctors are consulted, though parental concern is often strangely absent. Dr Fontana writes with humanity and with authority. He estimates the size of the problem in the U.S.A., which "may even rank with automobile accidents and the toxic infections encephalites as causes of typical disturbances of the central nervous system" (page 3), with a high death rate. The differential diagnosis and assessment of the social problem is discussed with an account of the law relative to succouring these children in his own country especially the difficulties at first involved in removing them for protective care.

Now that we are alerted in this country to the type of trauma that results, we have an added responsibility as family doctors to suspect injury inflicted by parents and to explore the social background through the available agencies. When our suspicion is aroused we must be prepared to give evidence when required. Still more important perhaps is our duty to secure preventive measures in cases of family unhappiness and social inadequacy before these young creatures suffer unduly. The multiplicity of injuries in some cases is often diagnostic and irreversible brain damage is only too frequent. Radiographs and photographs are distressingly illustrative. There is a list of references to publications from both sides of the Atlantic.