Modern Obstetrics in General Practice. Edited by G.N. Marsh. Oxford General Practice Series 9. Pp. xvi + 448, illustrated. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, Tokyo, 1985. £15.00.

Dr Marsh has edited a very important, original and exciting book on the 'New Style Obstetric Care', whose argument is advanced by many disciplines, 'noted feminists, distinguished professors of obstetrics, G.P.s and midwives.'

The pressure for new ideas comes from women's awareness and criticism, in AIMS and the Maternity Alliance, described by Catherine Boyd and others: and from the awareness of sections of the professions that women, in their most creative work, need a creative response.

Professor Stirrat argues that hospitals have taken on too much: that G.P.s and community midwives have been pushed out and made too anxious; that low risk cases have been treated with high risk methods.

Jean Towler's inspiring critical account of normal labour, Marion Hall's reassessment of antenatal programmes, and those of Mr Godfrey and others on diagnostic techniques, is followed by reviews of the assessment of risk. Bull and Marsh consider where and who is to deliver low risk cases; where, in 'integrated' or 'alongside' units, is the choice of the mother and the 'autonomy' of community midwife and G.P. best recognized and responsibility clarified.

Behind the book's theme, of the self-esteem of women and their families and their obstetric teams, Pitt's two chapters on the contrasting psychology of antenatal and postnatal states stand out.

Obstetrics may be emerging from a manic-depressive phase. We can be better midwives if we listen to women and their birth plans and work with them in the light of evidence presented in this book.

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Obstetrics in Outline. Michael D. Read and Stuart Mellor. A Wiley Medical Publication. Pp. viii + 256, illustrated. John Wiley, Chichester, New York, Brisbane, Toronto, Singapore, 1985. £8.95.

The authors of this pocket sized obstetric manual have aimed to fit their book into the slot between undergraduate text books (which will be biased towards the theoretical) and the advanced postgraduate tome inappropriate to the busy newly-qualified doctor.

The chapters are short, clearly set out and the print is easy to read. The clinical management of problems is often set out in the form of flow diagrams which are simple to follow. The authors accept that there are often different managements of many of the complications in obstetrics. In such cases they set out the various options and where they feel it necessary, advise the junior doctor to seek a consultant opinion before commencing treatment.

The book covers fully all aspects of ante-natal care and the management of women in labour. The puerperium receives an all too short section at the end of the book. The quality,

price and size of this book make it an essential purchase for all junior doctors during their first obstetric house job.

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Oxford Textbook of Public Health, Vol. 4: Specific Applications. Edited by Walter W. Holland, Roger Detels, George Knox, with the assistance of Ellie Breeze. Pp. xii + 472, illustrated. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, Toronto, 1985. £35.00.

Hobson's *Theory and Practice of Public Health* has now been extensively re-edited into the four volume *Oxford Textbook of Public Health*. The first volume includes a historical review of the determinants of health and the overall scope of public health. The second deals with public health promotion and the third with methods used in public health studies. This, the fourth and final volume, considers the major groups of diseases and the requirements of special care groups. It is divided into three sections, the first concerned with the application of public health methods to specific disease processes such as acute infection, nutrition, psychiatric conditions and neoplasms. Special emphasis is placed on the potential for prevention that has arisen from studies into aetiology. The second section considers the role of public health in relation to diseases of different systems and the final section reviews the health service needs of special groups. In a large and ambitious undertaking of this kind, these are inevitably a few topics that might usefully have been dealt with in more detail. However, particular instances of personal interest that may not have been covered very fully are easy enough to identify and usually do not detract from the overall value of good standard texts. This is certainly true in this case. The authors are world leaders in their fields and have produced authoritative accounts of topics ranging from Alzheimer's disease to dental health. Quite apart from the epidemiologists and community physicians who will find the volume of considerable value, it is also a very useful source of information for clinicians who want authoritative reviews about the general background to their special fields of interest.

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