motivated with remarks such as 'Governments should support health education', and 'not support adverse policies'. The useful chapter on termination counselling (euphemistically called pregnancy counselling) states that the average Health District with a population of 250,000 should expect 350 termination referrals per annum. The fact that my Inner London Health District carries out over 1,500 terminations per annum suggests we should be looking very closely at our health and sex education as well as the effectiveness of our Family Planning services.

There are excellent chapters on sexual dysfunction and genetic counselling which many gynaecologists will find helpful. The chapter on recognition and management of fluid retention is somewhat contentious both in regard to premenstrual syndrome and cyclical oedema. This is hardly surprising when one considers that people cannot even agree about the existence of these conditions, and treatment has been largely empirical.

The section on screening deals well with all aspects of cervical cytology but makes little mention of colposcopy, and it is disappointing that breast screening, ovarian and endometrial screening are not discussed at all.

The Preface states that the book is designed to give practical help to 'consultant obstetricians and gynaecologists, general practitioners and family planning doctors'. Some of the chapters such as those on infertility and sterilisation counselling, would be found very basic by consultants, and specialists in training (who are not mentioned in the Preface) would not find these chapters of sufficient detail and depth. My impression generally is that the book will be of particular use to general practitioners and family planning doctors, but some of the more surgically orientated among us would certainly benefit from a medical refresher. This is the first British book confined to medical gynaecology and I have a feeling that others will follow soon.

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Practical Prescribing, Martin J. Brodie and P. Ian Harrison. Pp. x + 295. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1986. £14.95.

Cost-effectiveness is the criterion by which we are exhorted to evaluate new drugs, and it is not unreasonable to apply the same concept to our assessment of a book about drug prescribing.

This volume, says one of its authors, 'combines an educational approach with much practical material which the prescriber can consult when he has a problem.' Is it effective educationally? It begins with a section of pharmacological glossary, followed by sections on drugs of choice for common complaints and treatment policies, all in abbreviated short-note form, often using out-dated latin abbreviations. Tables follow of brief details on drugs, their side effects, interactions, cautions on their use, and their proprietary names. A detailed evaluation would be time consuming, but in a brief assay ketotifen was found to be described as a serotonin antagonist on one page and antihistamine on another. Cimetidine

and ranitidine are said to be excreted largely unchanged by the kidney in one table, and 50% metabolised in another. There is little, if any, important information in this book which is not readily available in the British National Formulary plus Prescribers Journal. Which brings us to the cost component of the criterion. Prescribers in the United Kingdom are already provided, without cost, with convenient sources of information, and it is difficult to see what this volume provides additionally which could reasonably be said to be cost-effective.

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Principles of Neurologic Diagnosis, Erwin B. Montgomery, Michael Wall and Victor W. Henderson. Pp. xiii + 286, illustrated, Little, Brown, Boston, Toronto, 1986. £13.70.

The authors encourage medical students to apply their knowledge of neurological anatomy and physiology to the analysis of a patient's history and physical signs at the bedside.

An introduction of transatlantic wordiness prefaces a series of 24 clinical cases constructed to span neurological presentation; 1. Weakness of the right arm and leg and numbness of the left arm and leg. 2. Right sided weakness and left gaze paresis etc. (the authors agree that the approach is somewhat artificial). The reader is led to translate physical signs into disordered neuro-anatomy with the help of line drawings (fairly clear but somewhat repetitious) and once the lesion has been sited from the analysis of signs a differential diagnosis and likely pathology are discussed. Occasional errors appear; the motor outflow from the nucleus ambiguus lies predominantly within the vagus rather than the glosso-pharyngeal nerve. The cost conscious trainee in the National Health Service may be irritated by the format; perhaps the frequent blank spaces are to inspire the student to his own illustration, anatomical or otherwise!

The book does offer a good deal of useful clinical information in an entertaining form so that it can be recommended to those starting or finishing their clinical course. This is not a comprehensive textbook of neurology to be purchased by students but rather a library text whose pages can be perused to introduce or revise the logic of bedside diagnosis. House officers beginning their tour of duty on the neurological or neurosurgical wards might benefit from reading this book and it could be scanned in a relaxed fashion on the train journey to the membership examination.

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