Book Reviews

ABC of Dermatology, edited by P.K. Buxton. Pp. 91, illustrated. British Medical Journal, London, 1988. £10.95 UK; £13.00 Abroad.

Any attempt at boiling down a subject as wide and varied as dermatology offers itself to the criticism of oversimplification by specialties and intellectual arrogance by generalists. In these articles, published as a series in the *British Medical Journal* and now in book form, Dr Buxton has produced a readable and practical crystal of pleasing clarity and size.

There are some hesitant moments: standardization of the numerous lists and tables and elimination of the odd unhelpful photograph (herpes zoster; page 47, scabies burrows; page 56) would sharpen the presentation.

The practical suggestions are very much those of the Edinburgh department. They are based on long experience, are known to be helpful and are clearly presented.

As a series of individual essays on important clinical dermatological conditions, this book rightfully claims a place on the bookshelves of medical students, general practitioners and general physicians.

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Adult Abnormal Psychology, edited by E. Miller & P.J. Cooper. Pp. x + 380. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, 1988. £29.95.

This volume is intended as a textbook of abnormal psychology suitable for clinical psychology and psychiatry trainees. As such, it fills an important niche, since the main competitors are glossy texts designed for the US student market. The book is structured along conventional lines, with chapters on classification, methodology, and the major psychiatric conditions, together with problems such as drug dependence and problems in the elderly.

The general standard of contributions is very high, with excellent chapters on anxiety, schizophrenia, eating disorders and sexual dysfunction. In keeping with contemporary trends, most authors favour cognitive-behavioural formulations of disorders, as opposed to the learning or social frameworks that might have been preferred a decade ago. There are a few disappointments: the chapter on hysteria is somewhat indecisive, while the historical survey is written in an inflated style and does not adequately cover the areas likely to be of most relevance to readers. I have two more general reservations. The first is that treatment research is deliberately omitted from consideration, on the basis of an arbitrary distinction between 'abnormal' and 'clinical' psychology. This is unfortunate, not only because analysis of mechanisms can benefit from studying the effects of interventions, but also because some of the major recent developments in understanding psychopathology have

emerged primarily from the therapeutic perspective. The second limitation is that biological processes are given short shrift in most chapters (that on anxiety being the honorable exception). Readers should be wary that the overview with which they are presented may be incomplete. Within its scope however, the book can be recommended as a thorough and informed text on abnormal psychology.

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Annual Review of Public Health Vol 9, 1988, edited by Lester Breslow, Jonathan E. Fielding, and Lester B. Lave. Pp. vi + 603. Annual Reviews, Palo Alto, Ca, USA, 1988. \$39 (USA and Canada); \$43 (elsewhere).

The 1988 edition of the US Annual Review of Public Health contains reviews of 22 topics, in the fields of health promotion (5), epidemiology and prevention of specific disease (5), health hazards (4), screening, vaccines, statistical methods and health care delivery (2 topics each). There is nothing on cardiovascular diseases, and of the conditions reviewed, the most prevalent in the US appears to be hunger (20 million Americans). The reviews are long (average 27 pages) for what they have to say, and there is a tendency to document in detail where summary tables would be more concise and clear. The conclusions tend to be cautious. The reviews sometimes avoid discussion of controversies, for example the review of health hazards of passive smoking gives only fleeting mention of Lee's assertion that the disease associations could be produced by a small minority of smokers falsely claiming to be non-smokers, and the review of mumps and other viral vaccines does not consider the problem that a vaccination policy might actually increase overall morbidity if uptake was incomplete (since the non-vaccinated might not get mumps until adulthood, when morbidity is higher).

Overall, the reviews will probably be of relatively little use for those who are already familiar with a topic but may provide a useful and easily available source for those who are not, since the relevant material is documented and the generally accepted interpretation is usually made.

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A Manual of Normal Neonatal Care, N.R.C. Robertson. Pp. xi + 240. Edward Arnold, London, Baltimore, Melbourne, Auckland, 1988. £7.95.

There are now a number of excellent manuals and text books on the care of the pre-term and critically ill full-term baby, including two by Dr Robertson. This manual has been written to aid those providing care for the other 90 to 95% of

new-born babies who do not require admission to the intensive or special care unit. The manual starts logically with definitions, statistics and a useful chapter on the effects of maternal illness, bad habits and therapy on the new-born child. This is followed by statements on the care of the baby in the delivery suite, including resuscitation, examination of the new-born, routine post-natal care and neonatal screening. There is a highly practical chapter on infant feeding, in which the author pulls no punches in expressing his own opinion. The remainder of the book deals with problems which are likely to arise in the post-natal ward, including topics such as care for the small normal pre-term and normal small-for-dates babies and problems associated with infection, jaundice, post-maturity and malformations which are likely to be seen on the post-natal ward.

The strength of this manual is that it is a highly practical statement based on the personal experience of the author. It is written in a very clear didactic form with touches of humour. I am sure all those who are responsible for the care of babies in post-natal wards, including obstetric SHOs, general practitioners and midwives, will find this book invaluable. I suspect it will be just as popular as its companion *A Manual of Neonatal Intensive Care*. In my opinion it certainly deserves to succeed.

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On the Demon Drink, By Jancis Robinson. Pp. 208. Mitchell Beazley, London, 1988. £9.95.

Journalists like Ms Robinson – and the drinks industry – are fond of using the expression ‘anti-alcohol lobby’ to stigmatize those of us who campaign against alcohol abuse. The reason becomes clear half way through the present volume:

‘The temperance movement began as . . . a group of very sensible and concerned individuals who urged moderation, certainly not abstinence’. So it is necessary to reassure Ms Robinson and her allies that most of us enjoy a drink too and are certainly not bent on resurrecting prohibition. Our message, like hers, is moderation, though it is not always clear what she means by this. To be fair she is not above chastising her fellow drinkers, the government and the drinks industry in an attempt to present a balanced view of the great alcohol debate.

One of her chief obsessions is liver cirrhosis which recurs like a *leit-motiv* throughout the text. This is unfortunate because it gives undue prominence to this and indeed other physical complications of alcohol excess. Nor is it true to say that physical damage ‘usually predates’ dependence; well over 80% of our most severely dependent clients have no serious physical disease. Such concentration on physical illness gives a very one-sided view, called by those most critical of doctors ‘the medical model’. It ignores the enormous amount of social, psychological, economic and financial distress suffered not only by the individual but by families, friends and colleagues, which is the real burden of overindulgence. Apart from drink driving, which she could hardly avoid, Ms Robinson says nothing about these important aspects; perhaps she is saving them for another book.

A recurrent theme of ‘the anti-alcohol lobby’ is the need to educate professionals and public about alcohol. In spite of a good deal of repetition, some contradiction, and occasional superficiality we should welcome *On the Demon Drink* as a competent, informative, journalistic and thoroughly readable attempt to do just that. If only doctors would read . . .

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Books Received

Allergy to Bee Stings and its Prevention, L.R. Croft. Pp. 104, illustrated. Elmwood Medical Monographs, Chorley, 1988. £12.95.

Annual Review of Genetics, Vol. 22, edited by Allan Campbell, Bruce S. Baker and Ira Herskowitz. Pp. ix + 704, illustrated. Annual Reviews Inc., Palo Alto, California, 1988. \$34.00 (USA & Canada); \$38.00 (elsewhere). Price includes postage and handling.

Hydrocephalus Shunt Infections, Roger Bayston. Pp. ix + 160, illustrated. Chapman and Hall, London, 1989. £22.50.

Loss and Bereavement, The Lisa Sainsbury Foundation Series, Bridget Cook and Shelagh G. Phillips. Pp. viii + 90, illustrated. Austen Cornish in association with The Lisa Sainsbury Foundation, London, 1988. £6.50 (incl. p & p).

Ultrastructural Pathology of the Cell and Matrix: a Text and Atlas of Physiological and Pathological Alterations in the Fine Structure of Cellular and Extracellular Components. Two volumes, 3rd edition. Feroze N. Ghadially. Pp. xxiii + 1340, illustrated. Butterworths, London, Boston, Singapore, Sydney, Toronto, Wellington, 1988. £25.00.