HANDBOOK OF POISONS


Only in format can this be considered a handbook, for within its modest compass lies more practical information about poisons and poisoning than can be found in most textbooks. One wonders at the omniscience of the author that has enabled every worthwhile detail of nearly every known poison (whether medicinal, agricultural or industrial) to be included. Most poisoning cases demand speedy diagnosis and treatment and a work of reference should be designed with this essential in mind; in the present volume the text is so displayed that no time will be lost in finding what immediate measures should be taken. The structural formula of the poison is first given, followed by the clinical findings, treatment, prophylaxis and prognosis. Each of these sub-headings contains just the information one needs and, perhaps, with the dogmatism so comforting in an emergency!

It is natural to turn to those pages dealing with poisons with which we are most often concerned and, in doing so, it is at once apparent how divergent views on treatment may be. In barbiturate coma the author holds no brief for the analeptic drugs and states that no antidote is known; no mention is made of the antipodean antidote bemegride ("Megimide"), which has been used with considerable success. Indeed, what does or does not constitute an antidote may have given the author some trouble; under "anticoagulants" neither heparin nor the synthetics are accorded one, whereas 1 per cent. injection of protamine sulphate surely fills the bill for the former and natural vitamin K₃ for the latter. This monograph on anticoagulants is not quite satisfactory; the author fails to stress the importance of using vitamin K₃ and not one of the synthetic analogues which have been used in the past with such poor results. No mention at all is made of protamine sulphate, which removes circulating heparin.

But if it is the reviewer's job to find faults in a work, then this one has presented a difficult task. It is easier (and pleasurable) in this instance to give unqualified approval to a volume to which every casualty department certainly, and perhaps every general practitioner, ought to have ready access.

M.H.P.

A FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF WAR NEUROSES
V.A. Medical Monograph


As the authors say in their introduction, comparatively little is known about the natural history of the neuroses. This book is the report of a follow-up study of neuroses occurring in time of war among the United States Forces; the study was directed by the National Research Council and financed by the Veterans Administration. The material for the study consisted of a representative sample of men admitted to the Forces in 1944: 985 from the Army and 490 from the Navy and Marine Corps. Of this total of 1,475 men, 955 were examined by one of 225 psychiatrists throughout the country, and the rest studied on the basis of records only. Most of the psychiatric examinations were made in the fifth or sixth year after first admission for psychoneurosis. Information in the examination and reports was converted into a form allowing of coding and statistical analysis.

The bulk of the book is made up of a detailed survey of this analysis, and it does not lend itself to summarizing. A vast amount of information is contained in the many tables and chapters, and the book is well and clearly set out. Part I is concerned with characteristics of the population sampled, Part II with an analysis of follow-up data, Part III with an analysis of military experience, Part IV with a survey of the pre-service period, and Part V with the implications of this study for the utilization of manpower.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the book for the clinical worker is Chapter IV, on follow-up status. Ninety per cent. of the men examined complained of symptoms, especially irritability, anxiety, gastro-intestinal complaints, restlessness and headache. In 14 per cent. full-time employment seemed to be prevented by illness. Sixty per cent. of the men who had been ill at discharge had improved by the time they appeared for examination. Only 36 per cent. had sought any treatment for their symptoms. Some 40 per cent. were drawing compensation for psychiatric disability, but in only 10 per cent. of the entire sample was such payment thought to have an ill effect.

Medical literature contains few such large-scale studies of neurosis, and very few so well documented as this. The authors are to be congratulated on the product of their prolonged and diligent labour.

D.O.

MANAGEMENT OF LIFE-THREATENING POLIOMYELITIS


This book contains a series of papers analysing the experiences gained in the 1952-53 poliomyelitis epidemic in Copenhagen. This epidemic was characterized by an unusually high percentage of patients suffering from bulbar paralysis and the manner in which Professor Lassen and his colleagues tackled this emergency was a remarkable achievement. This factor and the limited number of mechanical respirators available soon led them to treat almost all their patients who showed evidence...