of as being too busy to bother with trivia; and the advice columns do not always have the answers to the problems that are worrying the mothers now.

Penelope Leach, though not trained formally in one of the health professions, has acquired an expertise in the bringing up of babies which puts many professionals to shame. Furthermore, as a consequence of her experience following the publication of similar (but less exhaustive) books and taking part in phone-ins, she has acquired the valuable experience of knowing what sort of problems mothers (and fathers) worry about.

The Parents' A to Z is a collation of that experience and expertise. Her messages are clear and easy to follow: problems are never dismissed lightly. Reading all 736 pages is surely beyond even the most diligent reviewer – and this reviewer is not the most diligent – but what he has read was remarkably free of errors. The listing is alphabetical with excellent cross-references. Sub-headings are in an otherwise blank left-hand column to make them readily identifiable. All the important medical topics are covered from coughs, colds and ear disease to appendicitis and convulsions. Equally, and for a book of this nature more importantly, the difficulties encountered by mothers, such as feeding, sleeping, and habits – good and bad – are also dealt with, and extremely well: the section on play is outstanding.

I have no hesitation in recommending this book to the parents of the children whom I look after. I equally would recommend this book to every doctor who deals with children, whether in general or hospital practice. One of the first things I did was to write my name in it in the hope that no-one walks off with my copy.

Stuart Carne
Grove Health Centre,
London W12 8EJ.


This is extremely well written concise book, crammed with the latest facts and discussions surrounding the emotive and demanding subject of strokes.

Strokes may not be everyone's favourite medical problem but patients, and there are many of them occupying general and geriatric wards, can not just be wished away, and it is vital that all physicians and general practitioners become familiar with the optimum management of these unfortunate patients. Dr Mulley writes clearly and with obvious sympathy of his subject, and the chapters are short but readable and full of invaluable helpful advice and observations on every aspect of the intensely practical care needed for patients who have suffered a stroke. It is clear to all of us who work with stroke patients that no enormous progress has been made in this disorder. Despite advances in imaging techniques, there are very few patients who will have their management altered and it still rests upon good nursing care, therapy, and a sympathetic and understanding approach to the individual patient. Patients who have had a stroke must not be relegated to the farthest corner of a ward, and then viewed as uninteresting, or bed-blocking, and passed swiftly by. Time must be given to his or her numerous problems, and an attempt made to boost morale.

Dr Mulley emphasises the above, and there are excellent chapters devoted to the perceptual and psychological disorders that may be experienced by the patient and misinterpreted by relatives or even nurses and doctors as non-cooperation or being difficult, as this is unfair and cruel. The final chapters of his book are helpful from a very practical aspect and I think this book should be in the library of every general practice and would not be amiss in the hands of relatives who are caring for stroke patients.

There is no guarantee that we ourselves will not end our days handicapped by the consequences of a stroke and I hope we fall into the care of someone like Dr Mulley.

M. Garland,
Colindale Hospital,
London NW9 5HG.


Ten years ago the World Health Organization (WHO) was directed by its constituent assembly to give special attention to the use and abuse of alcohol. Four years later it recognised that 'problems related to alcohol, and particularly its excessive consumption, rank among the world's major public health problems'. The present report, by an economist and an expert on alcohol, and the latest in an important series, has been prompted by the need for international data on production and consumption of alcohol.

The evidence is increasingly convincing that trends in indices of alcohol-related damage closely follow those in the amount of alcohol consumed per head of population. Where exceptions arise they can usually be traced to factors peculiar to the particular country; for example, in a developing society problems may at first be concentrated in the professional classes who can afford to drink alcohol; and again the amount of non-commercially produced alcohol – as high as a third in Norway, for example may not be known. Population structure, demographic data, attitudes to alcohol, and many other factors influence drinking patterns. Consumption of alcohol is rising rapidly in developing countries particularly, many of which do not have the public health facilities to deal with potential problems. Two striking examples taken from the many in this report illustrate the importance of having adequate figures. Beer production in Cameroon in the 1960s was 5 litres per capita compared with nearly 100 litres in the UK. Production levels have been rising so fast that if they are sustained for another six years they will overtake those in the UK. And a neighbouring west African country, Gabon, was fourth in the 1981 league table of beer consumption with 180 litres per person over 15 (143 litres in UK); it was not even mentioned among the 25 countries listed in 1960.

In general, global production and consumption of alcohol have more than doubled in the last 20 years. Beer followed this upward trend; wine has taken a bigger share of the market in traditionally beer-drinking countries, but consumption has fallen in the heaviest wine-drinking countries like France, Italy and Portugal; data on spirits are less reliable, largely because of non-commercial and illicit distillation, but production and consumption have been rising in most
countries, especially in those of the Eastern bloc. Another striking statistic is that the Republic of Korea has jumped from bottom of the 30 countries whose spirit consumption was recorded in 1960 to the clear leader in just 20 years.

The report is strong on statistics (there are 30 tables) but weak – perhaps inevitably so – on recommendations. It is fine to talk about more research, better data and more reliable indicators of production, consumption and alcohol-related problems; it is splendid to try and raise the public awareness of governments, general public and the scientific community. But there comes a time when words must give way to action, and it is later than most of us think.

Alex Paton

*British Postgraduate Medical Federation, 33 Millman Street, London WC1N 3EJ.*


There is a boom in epilepsy and books on epilepsy are a growth industry. Genuine advances in the understanding of the natural history of epilepsy, scientific assessment of the role of drug therapy, the increasing sophistication of biochemical and neuro-physiological techniques, and the exciting advances in our understanding of central nervous system transmission justify books of this title. The editors are to be congratulated. This is the second of a series of three, which they hope will 'form a cumulative textbook providing a comprehensive review of thought and practice in the field of epilepsy'. They are succeeding. The first two chapters are excellent reviews of the physiology and biochemistry of experimental seizure activity, and the remaining eleven chapters are all clinically orientated. They include the application of the contributions of modern imaging techniques. Reynolds gives a very succinct account of the effects of treatment on the prognosis of epilepsy, an understanding of great importance which is largely due to his own work. David Chadwick tackles a very difficult and hitherto almost completely ignored problem, that of when to discontinue anti-epileptic treatment. Dr Simon's review of the management of status epilepticus sadly reflects the availability of drugs in the United States, and ignores drugs that we would use such as chlorpromazine and clonazepam. It is nonetheless a clear guide on therapy, and an excellent review of the literature. Further chapters on the obtunding effects of anti-epileptic drugs, the monitoring of these drugs, the surgery of epilepsy, neo-natal seizures, psychogenic seizures, reflex epilepsy and a review of the benzodiazepines complete a thoroughly worthwhile book. It is recommended to all interested in epilepsy, and, even more so, to that proportion of neurologists (rapidly dwindling) who are not.

P. Harvey

*Royal Free Hospital, London NW3 2QG.*


This volume is a new addition to the ranks of the comprehensive textbooks of anaesthesia. It is a multi-author production, with the majority of the 42 contributors emanating from the editors' school at Leicester. However, there is also a significant output from other centres in the UK and chapters from the USA and Sweden.

The book covers the basic sciences, emphasising those aspects which are of special relevance to the anaesthetist and this section is notable for the very comprehensive chapter on physiology of the nervous system by Dr Sheila Willatts. Pharmacology is extensively reviewed in eight separate chapters, although some of the newer agents, such as isoflurane and 'Diprivan', perforce receive scant coverage. The contributions describing the overall conduct of anaesthetic practice by both local and general techniques are supplemented by chapters on equipment and monitoring and on anaesthesia for each surgical speciality. The general principles of cardiopulmonary resuscitation, intensive therapy and the relief of chronic and post-operative pain are included, together with a useful series of appendices containing helpful data.

The material presented is, by and large, up to date and will be eminently suitable for those in the early stages of their anaesthetic career, who wish to have an overview of the specialty contained in a single volume without excessive detail of any particular aspect. No references are given, but suggestions for further reading are listed at the end of each chapter.

Although a list of contributors is produced at the beginning of the book, the author's name does not appear in association with each chapter heading in the text, and I found this rather annoying during the review and hope it could be rectified during a reprint stage.

The book is bound in a soft-back cover, which I fear may deteriorate with its use as a bench book by many different individuals in a busy department. However, the text is clearly set out with helpful headings and titles and excellent line diagrams. There are also many photographic illustrations of equipment which will inevitably look dated, even in the near future, with the technology moving forward at such a rapid pace (the Dinamap automatic blood pressure device illustrated is already an obsolete model).

Professor Smith and Dr Aitkenhead are to be congratulated on soliciting and moulding together such excellent contributions. I have little doubt that this book will be a success and at the relatively modest price of £19.50, it is likely to be bought by individuals, as well as libraries.

Peter Baskett

*Frenchay Hospital, Bristol BS16 1LE.*