Books received

Cardiology. By DESMOND G. JULIAN. Fourth edition, Pp. 308, illustrated. Baillière Tindall, London, 1983. £6.95 (paper).

How to Write and Publish Papers in the Medical Sciences. By EDWARD J. HUTH. Pp. ix + 203. ISI Press, Philadelphia, 1982.

\$11.95 U.S.A., \$14.95 all other countries (softcover); \$17.95

U.S.A., \$20.95 all other countries (hardcover).

Hughlings Jackson on Psychiatry. By KENNETH DEWHURST. Pp. xi + 169. Sandford Publications, Oxford, 1982. £9.00.

Book reviews

Aliens and Alienists. Ethnic Minorities and Psychiatry

By ROLAND LITTLEWOOD and MAURICE LIPSEGE. Pp. 278. Penguin Books, London, 1982. £3.95.

This book concerns itself with the mental disturbances found in racial minorities in Great Britain, and particularly among West Indian immigrants. The approach taken is that the mental disturbances shown in these groups are a form of situational reaction reflecting their underlying anomie, which in turn is defined as a dislocation between the individual and his community, and is associated with a loss of purpose and meaning. It is also associated with a lack of symbols in the individual; the purpose of symbols being to mediate between the personal experience of the individual and the world of others. Mental illness in black people is therefore seen as socio-cultural, the form of which will change as the relationship of the immigrant to his new country changes, e.g. the diagnosis of schizophrenia will become less and will be replaced by overdoses.

Although references are made to the biological evidence for mental illness, this is generally dealt with in a somewhat dismissive fashion; psychiatrists are seen as part of the authoritarian mechanism of our society and that this role is reflected in their practice.

The sympathetic approach of the authors to minorities is vitiated by the generally tendentious tone of the book, and in particular by the almost total neglect of crucial issues, such as the difference in frequency and type of mental disturbances in West Indian and Chinese populations, the incidence of mental illness in different countries and genetic factors in mental illness. The problems of the nature of mental illness and its relationship to distress reactions of various kinds is not examined and this makes it difficult to see how a suitable therapeutic plan could be constructed. If our understanding of the mental disturbances in minority groups is to be furthered, a purely sympathetic description of their problems is not in itself sufficient. More research concerning the pathogenesis, course and treatment of mental illness in these groups would seem to be a more helpful approach.

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Medicines: A Guide for Everybody

By PETER PARISH. Fourth Edition, Pp. 475. Penguin Books, London, 1982. £2.95.

This paperback is subtitled 'The indispensable reference book for those who want information about drugs they or their families have been prescribed'. It is the fourth edition in 6 years which indicates that a great many patients must be interested in what their doctors prescribe for them. They could not have a better guide.

It has 3 parts. The first is about how drugs work in the body and the second about groups of drugs under such headings as 'Drugs used to treat' (hypertension, diabetes, coughs etc) and 'Slimming Drugs' (e.g. vitamins, antibiotics). The section on antidepressants is particularly useful for general practitioners and contains a better account of the problems of classifying depression and prescribing for it than most psychiatric textbooks.

Part III is about individual drugs and complements the BNF and MIMS as a source of information. You can find out what you want quicker in it. If you want to know more about, for example, spironolactone and turn to MIMS, the alphabetical index at the end does not list it. You turn to the non-proprietary index to find that there are 5 brand names for the drugs in Section 6A. Turning to that section you unearth the first-named, 'Aldactone' at the bottom of a crowded page and read about its uses, dosage and contra-indications. The index of the BNF lists 5 separate page numbers for spironolactone. In this Guide, you have merely to open Part III, thumb through the drugs starting with 'S' to spironolactone and there is a full description of the drug and its uses with contra-indications and adverse effects. I keep all three on my desk in the consulting room.

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Normal Renal Function. The Excretion of Water, Urea and Electrolytes derived from Food and Drink.

By W. J. O'CONNOR. Pp. v + 433, illustrated. Croom Helm London and Canberra, 1982. £15.95.

I found the aim and intended audience of this book difficult to assess. The book concerns control of fluid and solute excretion rather than renal function. It ignores important areas of renal function such as hormone production, Vitamin D metabolism, hormone degradation and the role of the kidney in controlling and conserving small molecular waste substances by glomerular filtration and proximal tubular reabsorption or degradation, but includes work on nitrogen metabolism, thirst mechanisms, and control of drinking etc. In discussing 'normal' function, the author reviews experiments on conscious animals in which the composition of plasma and urine kept close to the ranges of normal life. At times, this view is pursued too vigorously so that lessons to be learned from micropuncture studies and abnormal states are to some extent ignored.

The book is not for beginners. It plunges immediately into a review of experiments on specific areas of fluid and solute excretion with no introductory discussion of overall renal function. It is divided into 2 parts: the first part considers acute experiments, and the second long-term balance experiments. The chapters are addressed to specific subjects such as glomerular filtration rate, excretion of urea, phosphate, potassium, sodium, bicarbonate etc and comprise presentations of experiments concerning these aspects of renal function. The reader is not always helped to assess these experiments and conclusions and summaries are often difficult to find. However, many important points are emphasised and clarified, especially the predominant role of control of sodium and potassium excretion over other excretory functions of the kidney, and the interrelationships between plasma protein concentration, glomerular filtration rate, and clearance rates of many solutes. The chapters on sodium excretion are particularly good, but I found the work on acid-base balance disappointing.

Presentation of the book is poor. The print is difficult to read and the figures and tables are often far removed from the relevant

passages or text. At the beginning of each chapter its contents are clearly listed.

This book is a personal view of a limited range of experiments on a limited area of kidney function. It will be stimulating to those with a keen interest in renal physiology but will be of little value to the average clinician or those only casually interested in the field.

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Treatment of Cancer

Edited by KEITH E. HALNAN. Pp. 895, illustrated. Chapman and Hall, London, 1982. £40.00.

The emergence of clinical oncology as a subdiscipline of medicine has inspired a spate of hastily prepared, frequently premature texts on the treatment of cancer—the majority smelling more of the lamp than of the ward or clinic. The treatise under review is an heroic attempt to correct this. Its essential theme, enunciated somewhat apologetically in the preface, is that efficient management of a cancer requires a multi-disciplinary approach, a concept with which the reviewer is in accord, with the proviso that, ultimately, the problem involves one doctor and his patient.

The text is divided into 3 sections. The first, a review of general principles and the scientific basis of therapy, is sound, well referenced, but somewhat uninspiring as it adds little new to existing knowledge not readily available in other, cheaper, texts. Is it really necessary, in a book of this nature, to give a list of chemotherapeutic drugs running to some 10 pages?

The major part of the treatise reviews, in some 29 chapters, treatment of cancers according to site. It is in this section one suspects the editors desired to establish their theme. Sadly, it does not achieve this objective. The employment of some 75 authors has inevitably created a sort of scissors and pastepot structure in which the central theme is obscured. The various specialists have placed too much emphasis on the minutia of their therapeutic techniques. The reviewer would have preferred them to have concentrated rather on what they could offer, or perhaps more importantly what they could not offer to the management of a particular cancer. The description of radiotherapy techniques is possibly inadequate for the postgraduate aspirant to a career in radiotherapy, yet too detailed for the aspiring oncological surgeon. The converse also applies. Those responsible for the chemotherapy are, however, to be congratulated in that they have avoided the current vogue of presenting 'cookery book recipes'. The section contains a wealth of current information, well analysed and referenced. The purist could perhaps take exception to some analytical tables where results are expressed in percentages when there are less than 100 patients in the group.

The final section is concerned with methods and techniques. It contains some valuable chapters of universal interest on the general medical care of the cancer patient. Others, such as the design of radiotherapy equipment, are less relevant to the central theme. The concluding 2 chapters of this section concerning the design of clinical trials and the meaning and purpose of statistical analysis, the reviewer found stimulating, free of jargon and added to his appreciation of this important aspect of oncology upon which future improvements in cancer treatment depend.

Finally it is difficult to delineate the audience to which this treatise is addressed. Most certainly it is not, for reasons given above, suitable as a training text for the postgraduate student aspiring to a career in one of the various branches of oncology. Perhaps it is directed as the publishers indicate to the experienced oncologist. If so, the purchaser would be well advised to carefully inspect his copy on receipt. One does not expect the spine of a £40 textbook to break on second opening with resultant spilling of the central pages as happened with the reviewer's copy.

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Surgical Review 3.

Edited by J. S. P. LUMLEY and J. L. CRAVEN. Pp. viii+315, illustrated. Pitman Books, London, 1982. £19.50.

Surgical Review 3 is a series of personal views on surgical subjects bound in a single volume to provide up-to-date information on developing subjects. Particularly valuable and easy reading for the non-specialist are contributions on: immunotherapy for cancer, relief of postoperative pain, radiation treatment for early breast cancer and a chapter entitled 'Who needs nutritional support?'. Somewhat disappointing were the chapters devoted to ovarian cancer, the role of blood in vascular diseases and a French contribution on the subject of small bowel resection, pathophysiology and management.

Inevitably, the reviewer must ask the question 'to whom has this book been written?' Certain articles provide excellent up-to-date information which is entirely appropriate for a specialist within a specific field; these include pituitary surgery for the ENT specialist and neurosurgeon, surgery of rheumatoid arthritis for the orthopaedic surgeon and rheumatologist. On the other hand, this book provides articles throughout the entire range of surgery and gynaecology. One wonders whether this has a major appeal to the consultant surgeon busy in clinical practice at a district general hospital. For the humble general surgeon, a more detailed account on ovarian cancer with the place of radical surgical treatment and chemotherapy would have been welcome. Possibly the most important contribution was the last chapter entitled 'Life after death for the surgeon' written both by a surgical pathologist and a barrister. This timely chapter portrays the role of the coroner, the position of the law and the responsibilities of the surgeon in present surgical practice. Increasingly, surgeons are faced with medico-legal and ethical dilemmas, it is entirely appropriate therefore that a textbook which aims to bring together new aspects of surgical practice should include this note of caution and realism.

I believe this will be a useful contribution. It will undoubtedly be read selectively since the diet is too varied for most palates but at £19.50 I think that this is a useful buy and certainly should be stocked by all postgraduate libraries.

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Women Doctors. Choices and Constraints in Policies for Medical Manpower.

By PATRICIA DAY. King's Fund Project Paper No. 28. Pp. 136. King Edward's Hospital Fund for London, London, 1982. £2.30.

The aims of this project are stated as being firstly, to review the available information about women doctors and secondly, to put the policy implications of the growth in the number of women medical graduates into the wider context of social developments, national and international.

It provides a discursive but conscientiously researched account of the available data about women doctors' employment, and some new impressions about the functioning of schemes for part-time work (retainer scheme) and training (HM69/6 and PM79/3). The difficulties caused by central (DHSS) approval of candidates and separate regional or subregional provision (or non-provision) of funds for the PM79/3 scheme in England are stressed.

Attention is drawn to the likelihood of reduction in numbers of part-time posts in a time of financial restrictions. The point is made that these ad hoc arrangements for individual doctors with family responsibilities seem less appropriate as the proportion of women qualifying in medicine increases.

In respect of policy implications of this increase it is stated that 'in future, policy will have to address itself to the more difficult problem of creating a system which has the flexibility required to accommodate the aspirations and needs of both women and men doctors'. This sounds good, but does not say how the flexibility can be achieved. No other policy implications are clearly identified. The reason stated is the uncertainty of the future. For example, women's apparent preference for specialties now defined as 'shortage' may not