

## Book reviews

### Alder Hey Book of Children's Doses

(Fourth edition). Pp. 39, paper cover. Liverpool Area Health Authority (Teaching). Obtainable from Pharmacy Office, Alder Hey, Children's Hospital, Eaton Road, Liverpool L12 2AP, 1979. 40p (postage included) (Europe 50p, overseas 60p).

This booklet gives details of drug administration as prescribed at the Alder Hey Children's Hospital. It also gives information on the presentation of the various formulations. Total daily doses are quoted, the divided dose necessary must then be calculated. A comprehensive list of preparations is then provided, following brief general comments on mean body weights, metric conversions, and the theoretical percentages of adult doses at different ages. A surface area nomogram is also available. Separate sections are included on the use of digoxin and anti-convulsants. It is not a comprehensive *vade mecum* intended to give advice on the management and treatment of emergencies in childhood. Nevertheless, its accurate and lucid presentation should assure it a useful place in the pocket of many a hard-pressed resident in paediatrics.

### Atlas of the Newborn

By NEIL O'DOHERTY. Pp. 412, illustrated. MTP Press, Lancaster, 1979. £14.95.

It is very difficult to review an atlas as one must use words to describe and criticize or complement, and one knows each picture is worth a thousand words. The Atlas of the Newborn by Dr Neil O'Doherty provides the student and the practitioner with a ready reference to a myriad of common everyday and not so everyday neonatal problems. It is organized under several subheadings which are both logical and add to the ease of identifying the clinical problem. The pictures are of good quality and adequate contrast.

The text does not lay claim to be authoritative but does provide a useful guide although I found it awkward to flip from text to picture and back again and would have preferred it to be better placed with the photographs in question.

The book is useful for the medical student, house officer, nursing staff and consultants as a pictorial reference to complement both clinical situations and other more wordy textbooks. An atlas such as this does have a place in the nursery office as well as the library.

### British Medical Bulletin

Volume 35, Number 1, January 1979. Influenza. Pp. viii+96, illustrated. Medical Department, The British Council, London, 1979. £5.00 (U.K.); £6.00 (other countries); \$12.50 (U.S.A. and Canada).

Influenza is of considerable importance in terms of worldwide morbidity and mortality. Antigenic variation of influenza A virus, which leads directly to new epidemics of disease, has for many years been of interest to the epidemiologist and virologist and a source of some anxiety to us all.

For the past 30 years, new antigenic forms of influenza A virus have replaced existing viruses. In December 1977, the H3N2 strains of 'Hong Kong' virus which had been prevalent for 10 years, were joined by the H1N1 virus which had previously caused disease in the decade 1947-1957. This unusual situation has continued for more than one year and there is no sign at present of disappearance of the H3N2 strains.

A fundamental question from the standpoint of controlling human influenza is the nature of the survival of viruses such as the H1N1 strains during their apparent absence from man. Of even more importance is the need to understand the origin of new, previously unrecorded antigenic variants such as the Asian H2N2 virus of 1957.

No answers to these questions are provided by this bulletin, but there are certainly some clues. The papers dealing with physicochemical analysis of the virus are of particular interest because they now relate so directly to epidemiology and immunology. The papers describing vaccination and chemotherapy which are both well presented, describe the present situation and difficulties, and indicate possible future developments.

Following the pattern of previous volumes in the series, this set of reviews is of a high standard and will be welcomed by many in medicine, microbiology and allied fields.

### By Guess or by What? Information with Design in the NHS

Papers by P. D. Fox, and others. Edited by GORDON MCLACHLAN. Problems and Progress in Medical Care. Essays in Current Research 11th series. Pp. 125, soft cover. Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust: Oxford University Press, 1978. £4.00.

These four papers are something of a mixed bag in terms of their grasp of the general subject matter of the volume. More than half the space is taken up by an essay (intended also for an audience in the U.S.A.) by Mr P. D. Fox of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, who spent 1976-77 at the Department of Community Medicine, St Thomas's Hospital Medical School. Two other papers follow-up some of the leads established by Mr Fox, with particular reference to the position of 'managers' in the NHS service since the 1974 re-organization, while the final paper concentrates on some specific issues arising from current mortality rates in Scotland.

Mr Fox recognizes the achievements of the NHS, and its potential for even greater effectiveness: he points out that some criticisms are made on unsure foundations, e.g. the dubious reliability of waiting-list statistics, and the lack of accountability in regard to the operation of much primary care. He does, however, also assess very objectively the planning problems that exist in the 1974 NHS structure, many of them arising from the inadequate collection of medical and financial information - although there is now a greater awareness of the need to establish and use appropriate data systems. As he reminds his readers, the DHSS 'Priorities' document and the RAWP report (both of 1976) reflect the degree to which geographical imbalances in the provision of medical care remain to a great extent what they were in 1946. He concludes that many of the problems encountered by the NHS are of a kind to be met with in most medical care systems in the Western world.

Mr E. G. Nelson (Durham University Business School) discusses the elusive concept of 'standard of care' and its relationship to given levels of financing in the NHS. This prompts questions about accountability for the management of the service and the part to be played therein by the members of the health care professions themselves.

Mr R. F. A. Shegog (Deputy Secretary of the Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust) refers to the recent work which has been undertaken on the training of managers in the NHS. He notes the importance for the on-going planning process of skills in numeracy and information-handling, and suggests that their absence has contributed to a lack of