Books received

- Clinics in Haematology*. Vol. 11, No. 1, Feb. 1982. *Myeloma and Related Disorders*. Edited by S. E. SALMON. Pp. 238, illustrated. W. B. Saunders, London, Philadelphia and Toronto, 1982. £10.75.
- Colour Atlas of Dermatology*. By L. K. BHUTANI. Pp. 192, illustrated. Interprint, New Delhi, 1982. Rs. 135.00.
- The Complete Medical Consultant*. By A. H. OSMOND. Pp. 114, illustrated. H. K. Lewis, London, 1982. £7.00.
- Decade of Discovery. Advances in Cancer Research 1971-1981*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Pp. 74, illustrated. National Institutes of Health, Washington, 1981.
- Examination Notes in Psychiatry*. By JONATHAN BIRD and GLYNN HARRISON. Pp. 278. John Wright, PSG Inc., Boston, Bristol and London, 1982. £7.50.
- Gastroenterology*. By IAN A. D. BOUCHIER. Bailliere's Concise Medical Textbooks. 3rd edn. Pp. 389, illustrated. Bailliere Tindall, London, 1982. £8.00.
- Human Herpesvirus Infections. Clinical Aspects*. Edited by RONALD GLASER and TAMAR GOTTLIEB-STEMATSKY. *Infectious Diseases and Antimicrobial Agents/2*. Pp. 280, illustrated. Marcel Dekker, New York, 1982. Sw.Fr. 105.00.
- Malignant Disease of the Vulva*. By STANLEY WAY, assisted by DAVID GUTHRIE and PETER PHILIPS. Pp. 83, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh and London, 1982. £9.95.
- Organic Acids in Man*. By R. CHALMERS and A. LAWSON. Pp. 523, illustrated. Chapman and Hall, London, 1982. £35.00.
- Progress in Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, Volume 2. Edited by JOHN STUDD. Pp. 288, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh and London, 1982. £14.00.
- Psychiatry Revision. Aids for Postgraduate Trainees*. By DORCAS BIRD, JONATHAN BIRD and GLYNN HARRISON. Pp. 352. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, 1982. £6.00.
- Sexual Abuse. Incest Victims and Their Families*. By JEAN GOODWIN with contributors. Pp. 209. John Wright, PSG Inc., Boston, Bristol and London, 1982. £13.50.
- Taking Uterine Cervical Smears*. By J. Elizabeth Macgregor. Pp. 20, illustrated. British Society for Clinical Cytology, London, 1982. 30p (50p including postage).
- Treatment of Cancer*. Edited by KEITH E. HALNAN. Pp. 895, illustrated. Chapman and Hall, London, 1982. £40.00.
- The Work of WHO 1980-81 Biennial Report of the Director-General*. Pp. 291. Geneva, World Health Organization, 1982. Sw.fr. 18.00.

Book reviews

Benefits Advice for Patients. A report on the work of the Welfare Rights Officer based at Wythenshawe Hospital

By ANNE WILLIAMS. Pp. 26. Welfare Rights Unit, City of Manchester Social Services, Manchester, 1982. £1.00

This is Ann Williams' report of her first eighteen months as Hospital Welfare Rights Officer for Manchester South District. Arising initially from hospital social workers' concern at the growing number of welfare rights enquiries they were receiving, the post was planned by a multi-disciplinary team and jointly funded by the AHA and Social Services Department.

Predictably the emphasis is on benefits for the sick and disabled, and the service has been deliberately restricted to outpatients. Appendices show intensive use—295 contacts in a single month—and there are impressive special project spin-offs which are compatible with the recent Barclay Committee's comments on the responsibilities of social workers to be 'political' by translating criticism and knowledge into service improvements. Among the projects are a system to ensure that ward staff help single householders admitted to hospital to claim rent and rate rebates and a publicity campaign for assistance with fares to hospital. There is clearly a need for patients to have the kind of information involved in this service and this initiative is undoubtedly 'a good thing' and energetically undertaken.

At a more analytic level it would be interesting to know why this method—social services staff attached to a hospital social services department—was chosen. The well tried alternative is Citizens' Advice Bureaux—and should not Social Security offices themselves provide an advocacy and information service as so many of the most serious problems concern them? The ready identification of social workers with rights advice will worry some social workers. We might also ask whether an outpatient department in a D.G.H. is really the best location, covering the most needy client group. Outpatients do have access in Manchester to a community based service: why were not the more isolated in-patients, particularly the longer stay ones, the focus? It is not clear how the priorities were sorted out, but working with out-patients on four different sites makes it pretty

impossible to operate the drop-in service which is intended. Work on staff training requires perhaps a higher priority. Nurses for example are well placed to help with the, on the whole, very normal anxieties of patients, and an emphasis on training might allow the welfare officer's expertise both to be more widely spread and also more effectively concentrated. And finally, the hospitals themselves: if we accept that they ought to be concerned 'holistically' about their patients' health, should they not routinely give out information to patients or even provide routine welfare screening for this health sapping and increasing problem of anxiety about money? Ward clerks, information packs and staff training all seem indicated; and while applauding this project we shall not wish social services to let others off the hook too readily.

Manchester has identified a neglected problem and a necessary job, and is undertaking vigorously one of an encouraging number of experiments around the country in bringing local authority services into hospital on the principle that patients should be helped to retain their rights and benefits as taxpayers and citizens, too often lost through hospitalization.

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Brain Biopsy. The Smear Technique for Neurosurgical Biopsies

By J. HUME ADAMS, D. I. GRAHAM and D. DOYLE. Pp. x + 124, illustrated. Chapman and Hall, London, 1981. £15.00.

This book will undoubtedly fulfill the needs of the trainee pathologists at whom it is principally aimed, both in neuropathology units and in centres where the general pathologist is called upon to examine neurological material.

In the introduction the authors discuss the need for rapid diagnosis in neurosurgery and the relative merits of frozen sections and smears. Anyone who may doubt the value of the smear technique should, after a brief study of this excellent volume, be persuaded that in this surgical field this technique has outstanding

merits and many advantages. The illustrations, which are generally good, demonstrate the excellent preservation of morphological detail and other characteristics of smears in a comprehensive range of tumours and other types of lesion encountered in a neurosurgical practice. Incorporated in the introductory chapter there is an excellent two-page tabulation of tumours of the central nervous system, based on the current W.H.O. classification.

Early chapters describe the technique, emphasizing its simplicity and describe smear preparations of normal brain and of typical reactive changes. Resembling an atlas, the major part of the volume is devoted to illustrations (in black and white) with commendably short descriptive paragraphs. Six of the fourteen chapters are arranged systematically in the order of the classification provided and are devoted to tumours. Lesions compressing the spinal cord are dealt with in one chapter and lesions other than tumours—encephalitis, cerebral infarction and lesions in bone—in another.

One hopes that the prospective user of this book will not be discouraged by the authors' evident aim to include almost every lesion that may be encountered in a neurosurgeon's career, but will concentrate on the chapters which deal with the most common entities.

The simplicity of the smear technique has been emphasized but many pitfalls in the interpretation of the preparations may be encountered even by an experienced neuropathologist and the trainee will be well advised to give early attention to Chapter 14 which is entitled 'Diagnostic Problems'. In this chapter valuable information and guidance in handling these problems is provided.

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Clinical Aspects of Renal Physiology

By G. R. D. CATTO and J. A. R. SMITH. Pp. 147, illustrated. Baillière Tindall, London, 1981. £7.50.

During the last few years there has been a steady output of middle of the road nephrology books, reflecting the greater interest in this speciality than has even been manifested before. This is a healthy sign and, obviously, writing books of this sort is something to be encouraged.

I was therefore interested to see a book on Clinical Aspects of Renal Physiology, and I think the authors have managed successfully to combine clinical advice on a background of physiological information. The problem in this sort of exercise is, of course, that if physiology is presented in the same sort of detail as is common in nephrology journals, virtually nobody would read the book, but I do feel that the authors have, perhaps, gone too far in the opposite direction as, for example, persistently referring to salt when what is meant is sodium.

The book is too short to be of much value to Membership students, but I would recommend it to medical students as being easily readable and readily understood. The diagrams are plain, but I was not particularly impressed by the quality of the photographs, and I was disappointed by the rather superficial treatment of important new ideas like natriuretic hormone.

However, these reservations will not, I am sure, detract from its value at the level of the final year student or house staff, as an introduction to the fascinating and intricate mystery of renal physiology.

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An Introduction to Paediatric Neurology

By GWILYM HOSKING. Pp. 352, illustrated. Faber and Faber, London, 1982. £11.50 (cased) £5.95 (paperback).

This compact paperback volume is aimed primarily at nurses and professions supplementary to medicine, social workers, teachers of handicapped children and others involved in their care. It is concise

and readable and covers most of the important neurological disorders in childhood. It also has a useful chapter of line drawings of anatomical structure of the nervous system and a further chapter of illustrations of the common as well as more specialized procedures in neurological investigation. The descriptions on the whole are clear, concise and comprehensible and dogmatic enough to give an air of authority. In a few places more basic description might be helpful—for example in the section on ataxia Dr Hosking wades in directly to a discussion of the various mechanisms and causes, without giving a clear description of what ataxia really is or looks like. Each chapter has a useful short list of recommended further reading and at the end there are also some general texts for reference and a very useful list of charitable and other organizations that may be of help in relation to the management of individual disorders. The role of the parent in the management of children with handicaps is also outlined. This book could also provide a useful base-line in paediatric neurology for the undergraduate medical student, but will probably not have sufficient depth to interest the postgraduate.

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MCQs in Paediatrics

By W. S. UTTLEY. Pp. xii + 168. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, 1982. £3.95.

The reviewer must confess that his first encounter with the multiple choice question some years ago produced a rather unfavourable reaction—a mixture of scepticism and hostility towards its contradictory mixture of dogmatism and imprecision. This first reaction has slowly changed, mainly as a result of increasing experiences of MCQs as an examiner for the DCH and of composing them for the examination and various publications. There is no doubt also that the standard of MCQs is rising all the time, and has now reached the position where the MCQ mark tallies very well with the marks awarded by examiners in an essay paper in the same examination. Although not yet universally beloved of candidates, there are many reasons for their popularity with examiners. They do not allow of verbosity, they eliminate the horror of indecipherable handwriting and they greatly reduce (though they do not abolish) the disadvantage of sketchy knowledge of the language. Above all, they save a huge amount of time—they can be marked by a computer.

This small book is based on Forfar's excellent *Textbook of Paediatrics*, and the author has clearly set out to acquaint prospective examinees with the format of these questions and his answers to them. In a useful preamble, he discusses the construction of different types of MCQ, the qualities needed by an ideal question, how to answer them and how to analyse their success in terms of ease of answering, discrimination between the good and bad examinee, and correlation with the rest of the examination. This is a very valuable section and should not be missed either by candidates or examiners. The lay-out is convenient with the answers on the reverse side of every page, making it very easy to cross-check. The answers are accompanied by short and pertinent comments on the topic justifying the 'true' or 'false' label.

As far as the questions themselves are concerned, they range from the commonplace to the highly esoteric, and the reviewer must express a personal dislike for a key which consists of a long paragraph, almost a clinical history. This seems to be a departure from the true nature of the genuine MCQ—pithy and to the point—and seems to offer opportunities for clouding the issue. It would also hardly be expected that the reviewer would agree with every answer and with every comment on the reverse page. But these are minor quibbles and do not amount to a significant criticism of this book. The author does not say whether he personally composed every question in the book. If he did, and knowing the labour involved in formulating them, he is to be congratulated indeed.

Any prospective candidate who works through this book without