

relation of the HLA system to endocrine disease. Paul Franchimont again reveals his clarity of thought in his chapter on the gonadotrophins. Christopher Edwards and his colleagues provide a chapter blending basic biochemistry and clinical applications in dealing with the renin-angiotensin and aldosterone system. Hendy and Kronenberg outline the role of recombinant DNA technology in the field of endocrinology. The pioneers of the cytochemical bioassay, Chayen and Bitensky, give a critical state of the art account of the field they developed. Roger Ekins shows his mastery of the field of free hormones in a scholarly review of the different models of hormone delivery.

All in all, a book for the connoisseur, which I would commend both to the clinician updating his basic knowledge and to the basic scientist exploring the clinical applications of his methodology.

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### Sex Problems in Practice

Articles from the British Medical Journal. Pp. 81. British Medical Association, London, 1982. £4.00.

When I was a medical student 30 plus years ago, sexual problems belonged either to the VD clinic or the department of psychiatry. 'Ordinary' doctors, even most gynaecologists, had nothing to do with this part of living. Times and attitudes have both changed and the medical profession now regards psychosexual counselling as one of its roles.

Patients with sexual problems may go to one of the clinics set up for this purpose, but very frequently they turn first to their GP and therefore, it is appropriate that the first 2 chapters of this excellent little book should be on what the GP can do and how he can recognize that the problem might exist. 'Let the Patient Talk' is the first sub-heading in the chapter on diagnosing sexual problems in general practice, which may sound obvious to the *cognoscenti*, but still needs to be learned by doctors trained to ask questions.

There are chapters on impotence in its various forms, including vaginismus and premature ejaculation, as well as how to deal with the fear of failure. There is a chapter on the whole question of training and referral, very important in what is to many of us a new field and not covered by the normal outpatient departments to which we are accustomed. There are 2 chapters on homosexuality, including lesbianism, and the book finishes with a chapter on iatrogenic sex problems, more common than we sometimes realize, and the difficulties faced by those with a physical disability.

All in all, a book to be strongly recommended, well written and short enough to be readable. There can be no substitute for experience if a physician wishes to become an expert in this field, but for most of us, this book constitutes an excellent introduction.

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### Sociology as Applied to Medicine

Edited by D. L. PATRICK and G. SCAMBLER. Pp. xiv + 255, illustrated. Bailliere Tindall, London, 1982. £6.50 (limp).

Sociology is a relatively new subject in the medical and nursing curriculum. This has led to a difficult problem for teachers of the subject who must aim at imparting a sound grasp of sociological concepts to students who are expected to cope with an increasingly crowded curriculum. Such students may not have time to consider the more detailed aspects of the subject or to study any of the more comprehensive text books. The authors of this volume have therefore aimed at providing a readable and concise introduction to some of the principle areas of concern in sociology and to consider their application to medical practice.

The text is clear and provides adequate and up-to-date references. Many of the problems discussed in this volume are inevitably

controversial and alternative view points are presented in a lively and stimulating manner.

The initial chapters of the book are concerned with concepts of health and illness and the impact of social factors on the individual's health and wellbeing. Other chapters discuss illness behaviour and the sick role, doctor-patient relationships and problems of communication in medical practice. These provide valuable insights for students, particularly in medicine where their previous experience may be limited to an organic concept of disease based on a study of anatomy and physiology. Other areas which receive attention include important problems such as death and dying, the special health problems of ethnic minority groups and of the elderly.

The final section of the book discusses some aspects of medicine as an instrument of social control. Some of the views expressed may be uncomfortable for students of medicine to read about; it is, however, vital, if doctors are to play a role in promoting health as well as curing disease, that they have some insight into aspects of professional behaviour both in relation to the health service itself and in their dealings with individual patients. Chapters dealing with the concepts of deviance, labelling and stigmatization are clearly set out and here again a difficult subject is dealt with clearly and with sensitivity. The final chapters deal with the measurement and evaluation of health care. The scales used by social scientists for measurement are explained and the problems associated with measurement of concepts such as discomfort, dissatisfaction and disability are described. The imperative to evaluate health care, both in the light of the growth of medical science and technology, and in the growth of expenditure on health services is stressed, as is the necessity to define objectives if any meaningful evaluation is to be attempted.

The expressed aim of the book, to provide topics for further study and discussion and to remain of manageable size, has been remarkably successful in presenting much information in a very concise and stimulating format.

This book should provide an excellent introduction to sociology as applied to medicine and should be of value, not only to students in medicine and other health professions, but also consultants and family practitioners who increasingly find themselves called upon to explain their own patterns of behaviour which we have long taken for granted.

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### Surgical Pathology of the Nervous System and its Coverings

By PETER C. BURGER and F. STEPHEN VOGEL. 2nd edn. Pp. xiii + 739, illustrated. John Wiley, New York, Chichester, 1982. £50.58.

Just as a reader will select a book for a specific purpose, so should authors decide the audience for whom they have written, in order to direct their work appropriately. Drs Burger and Vogel have written a very useful book, but it does show some confusion of purpose.

They have concisely described and have clearly illustrated almost all the common lesions of the brain and spinal cord that are likely to impinge on the surgeon and his pathologist colleague (with the partial exception of trauma, infarcts, and aneurysms) and have even managed a section on the peripheral nerves. Accordingly, the book is divided by anatomical region and then by major disease type. The text is concise and lucid and the illustrations, often multiple, of macroscopic and histological appearances, are admirably clear and to the point. As a catalogue and atlas, pathologists in particular should be grateful for the extensive display of lesions. However, that is all, and there is no real attempt to discuss and illustrate pathogenetic mechanisms and their consequences, only to show diagnostic features. There is a remarkably extensive and up-to-date reference list to the English literature after each section, which is far more detailed than the text.

The best feature of the book is the illustrations, which should make it desirable to pathologists, but they really deserve more about