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Postgraduate Medical Journal publishes original papers on subjects of current clinical importance and welcomes review articles with extensive, up-to-date bibliographies as guides to further reading. Several symposia are published each year, each devoted to a single subject and written by specialists in different disciplines. Most issues include authoritative Current Surveys of clinical problems, and well documented Reports of cases of particular interest, and Book Reviews.

A 'Notice to Contributors' is published on the inside back cover of this issue. The Editor reserves the right to make changes which may clarify or condense papers where this is considered desirable.

The Journal is covered by *Current Contents*, *Biological Abstracts*, *ASCA*, *ISI/BIOMED* and *Science Citation Index*.

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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 overdoes.

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.

B. SACKS,
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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.

ANDREW SMITH,
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Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU.

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 is 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 inter-relationships 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

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Standard usage. The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* is used as a reference for all spelling and hyphenation. Verbs which contain the suffix -ize (-ise) and their derivatives should be spelt with the z. Statistics and measurements should always be given in figures, i.e. 10 min, 20 hr, 5 ml, except where the number begins the sentence. SI units should be used wherever possible. Papers should be written in the third person.

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