out of the 29 authors come from without Canada and USA. This probably explains the orientation of this monograph which would have been greatly improved by a more international discussion.

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Disorders of Fluid and Electrolyte Balance: Diagnosis and Management, edited by Jules B. Puschett and Arthur Greenberg. Pp. xii + 259, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, New York, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, 1985. £21.50.

The thirteen contributors to this book are from the University of Pittsburgh medical school, mainly the renal electrolyte division. They cover the expected topics including acid-base and calcium, magnesium and phosphate but also urate metabolism, diagnosis in renal disease, dialysis and drug use in renal failure so that much information is provided which most readers would normally seek in a nephrology text. This space would have been better given to sections devoted to the disturbances occurring for example in heart failure, hepatic cirrhosis and vomiting, information on which is scattered in the book and occasionally duplicated or incomplete. Each contribution is good in itself but the editing should have been more purposeful.

In the individual chapters I particularly enjoyed the section on diuretic use and the attempt most contributors made to clarify the many causes of each disturbance on physiological lines. It would have been helpful if the lists had indicated which were more common. The book is strong on pathophysiology as would be expected in a transatlantic text. The use of mathematical formulae to calculate fluid and electrolyte deficiencies will be less familiar in this country and they should be understood, even if incorporated into practice with caution. In some sections the route to diagnosis might have been more clearly set out. On the other hand management is dealt with in very useful detail. Failure to emphasize the need for chloride in the correction of hypokalaemic metabolic alkalosis is one exception.

The book is well worth reading although it cannot be recommended as an ideal text on the subject.

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First Steps in Psychotherapy: Teaching Psychotherapy to Medical Students and General Practitioners, edited by H.H. Wolff, W. Knauss and W. Bräutigam. Pp. viii + 164. Springer-Verlag, Berlin, Heidelberg, New York, Tokyo, 1985. DM 58.00.

For over 20 years Michael Balint preached and practised a type of small group teaching for general practitioners. This approach, based on dynamically orientated psychotherapy, had great influence in the 1950s and 1960s and Balint type groups spread to several countries in Europe and to the United States. The emphasis in such groups was to make

general practitioners more aware of their influence as persons on their patients.

This book describes the transposition of this type of experience to the teaching of psychotherapy to medical students, as practised in 2 settings – University College Hospital and Heidelberg University in West Germany. In the third section of the book there are some accounts of Balint type work in general practice.

The idea that an undergraduate medical student might take on a patient for psychotherapeutic treatment may still seem surprising to many doctors, yet this is exactly what has been happening at University College Hospital since 1958. The main stimulus for this scheme has come from Heinz Wolff. Essentially students can volunteer to take on a patient whom they then see on their own, once a week for an hour, over a period of several months to a year. Supervision is provided by an experienced psychotherapist once a week in a small group with 3–5 students. In this context, students are introduced to such concepts as transference, countertransference, defence mechanisms and the significance of unconscious processes. Clinical responsibility remains with the referring consultant or the supervising psychotherapist. Since 1977 a similar scheme has operated at the psychosomatic clinic of the University of Heidelberg.

Parts I and II of this book consist of a series of essays, examining and reporting these 2 training schemes from differing viewpoints.

In the opening chapter, Heinz Wolff states that he is not primarily concerned with promoting or teaching a humane, empathic and caring attitude of doctors for patients, but is interested in teaching basic psychological understanding, based on analytically orientated psychotherapy, and yet it is this former area which our technology orientated, 'scientific' medical school training does so appallingly badly. Any approach which encourages our medical students to see a patient as a whole person with thoughts and feelings and not just a cluster of signs and symptoms must be applauded.

The weakness of this book is that it consists of a collection of essays, viewing essentially the same process from many different perspectives. Whilst this adds considerable colour it does make the book essentially anecdotal. I would have certainly welcomed a clearer overall account by a single author with details of exactly how many students took part, how many started and dropped out and how much time the supervising process actually took up. However exciting the idea, there are clearly limitations to an approach which will only be taken up by a small number of medical students. I would have also welcomed a comparison of this approach with what goes on elsewhere in the United Kingdom; for example, the interviewing of patients and pseudo-patients on video with feedback as pioneered in the Department of Psychiatry in Manchester.

Despite these comments this book is to be applauded. Although Dr Wolff has reported his work to the Association of University Teachers of Psychiatry and in one or two psychiatric journals, this is by far the most comprehensive account of what has been an exciting undergraduate teaching programme. There is no doubt that these particular schemes have attracted a number of medical students to psychiatry and to a psychotherapeutic view of certain patients' problems.

Sadly, it may be totally unrealistic to expect this type of teaching to spread to other medical schools in the United