Book Reviews

Advanced Medicine 22. Proceedings of a Conference Held at the Royal College of Physicians of London 10–13 February 1986, edited by David R. Triger. Pp. xiii + 416, illustrated. Baillière Tindall, London, Philadelphia, Toronto, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Sydney, Tokyo, Hong Kong, 1986. £19.95.

This excellent book is an edited account of the 22nd Advanced Medicine Conference held at the Royal College of Physicians in London in February 1986. I would highly recommend it both to physicians in training and to consultant general physicians as one of the better ways of keeping up to date with progress in medical science and its impact on clinical medicine. At £19.95 it is also, by current standards, good value. Contained within its 416 pages are reviews on regulatory mechanisms (interferons, calcium and atrial peptides), clinical immunology (advances in transplantation, HLA typing, new ideas on the pathogenesis of autoimmune disease, and the value of plasmapheresis), clinical trials in medicine (propranolol for variceal haemorrhage, blood pressure, transient ischaemic attacks, and the medical benefits of oral contraceptives), infectious diseases (AIDS virus, reactive arthritis, campylobacters, chlamydia, and tropical liver infections), new techniques (angioplasty, endoscopic sphincterotomy, renal stone treatment, continuous subcutaneous insulin, and laser therapy of the gut), applications of molecular biology (hepatitis B vaccines, genetics, and cancer treatment), new compounds (prostacyclin, free radicals, asymptomatic hypercalcaemia, and the management of poisoning) and neurology (multiple sclerosis, infectious degeneration of the nervous system, myopathic disorders, and migraine).

C.R.K. Hind
*Royal Liverpool Hospital,
Prescott Street,
Liverpool,
L7 8XP, UK.*

Alcohol: Our Favourite Drug: New Report on Alcohol and Alcohol-related Problems from a Special Committee of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Pp. xii + 213. Tavistock Publications, London, New York, 1986. £6.95 (paperback) £18.00 (hardback).

The first of three reports from Royal Colleges on the topic of alcohol appeared with the approach of the festive season in 1986. Under the chairmanship of Dr Bruce Ritson, the College of Psychiatrists has updated and revised its first report of 1979.

'Our society has chosen to co-exist with a potentially dangerous and addictive drug' and this publication ably and with great clarity, for both the professional and informed layman, examines and makes recommendations about this important issue confronting us.

An easily readable account of the historical and present perspectives of alcohol misuse, together with an overview of

the effects on the individual in terms of the harm, the cost to society, contributing factors in causation, treatment and where responsibilities lie is presented.

The recommendations fall into three categories, namely prevention, treatment and research. In the first, emphasis is made of the change from the report of 1979 in terms of somewhat more stringent levels of consumption, quoting guidelines of 21 units for men and 14 units for women spread throughout a week as representing low risk. Many of the suggestions require an increased Government commitment to instituting measures that will have an effect on improving the nation's health and reducing the harm caused by alcohol, particularly that 'taxation policies should be intentionally employed in the interest of health, to ensure that per capita consumption does not increase beyond the present level, and is by stages brought back to an agreed lower level'. Practical comments are made about advertising, drinking and driving and availability of alcohol.

Treatment recommendations refer to planning of services with roles for both primary health care agencies and specialized services. In addition, a review of the present adequacy of the training of caring professions is suggested. A final remark is made about research funding being commensurate with health and social costs of alcohol misuse.

In conclusion I would commend this publication to doctors, medical students, health workers in the alcohol field and the informed layman.

S. Wiseman
*St Pauls Road Medical Centre,
248 St Pauls Road,
London N1 2LJ, UK.*

Biofeedback and Related Therapies in Clinical Practice, Donald Marcer. Psychology and Medicine Series. Pp. xii + 259, illustrated. Croom Helm, London, Sydney, 1986. £22.50 (hardback), £10.95 (paperback).

Some members of the health profession have perhaps heard of the term biofeedback but most have not heard of it or have only a faint understanding of the subject. It is a fast growing subject with over 500 publications in the last five years and by providing an extensive review the author not only provides a quick introduction to the subject of biofeedback, but also points out its limitations, the extent of the contribution made by other related therapies like relaxation and meditation and its possible application in certain conditions.

As infections caused by single agents are gradually being replaced as important causes of morbidity by multifactorial chronic, often stress-related conditions, continual search for single curative or preventive agents is not only fruitless but may even be dangerous. On the other hand, carefully researched multimodel management approaches are likely to make us clinically more effective.

Part One starts with possible links between stress and disease, goes through the development of biofeedback and

some forms of relaxation techniques and ends with outlining the problems of research methodology in behavioural medicine. In Part Two, possible applications and limitations to conditions in which such therapies are showing early promise like hypertension, Raynaud's disease, simple cardiac arrhythmias, strokes, stuttering, spasmodic torticollis and faecal incontinence are discussed.

Since therapy as well as research in this direction is likely to involve multidisciplinary teams, the language and content of the book are appropriately pitched and the reading is made easier with liberal use of illustrations and graphs. Every doctor, medical student, psychologist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist and nurse should have easy access to this book.

Chandra Patel
Dept. of Community Medicine,
University College London and
Middlesex Hospital Medical School,
London WC1E 6EA, UK.

The Bog Man and the Archaeology of People, Don Brothwell, Pp. 128 illustrated. British Museum Publications, London, 1986. £5.95.

On 1st August 1984 at Lindow Moss in Cheshire, peat workers found the remains of a man. This is an absorbing account of the work of specialists in many disciplines which has since gone into showing that 'Pete Bog', as the media christened him, lived about 300 BC. He was blood group O, about 5'8" tall, and perhaps 30 years old. He had lost only two teeth, had been eating cereals, possibly charred bread and also mistletoe pollen grains (which may have ritual significance). He had a probably heavy infestation with *Trichuris* and *Ascaris* worms and Schmorl's nodes in his vertebrae, but no other natural disease was detected. He had however had his throat cut, his skull fractured by a blunt instrument, and a ligature tied tightly round his neck – an unexplained excess of causes of unnatural death reminiscent of Father Brown.

This book is disappointing in three ways. Firstly I found it difficult to discover exactly what of the Lindow Man was present and what was missing, until on p. 61 it appears that the body was 'devoid of lower buttocks, pubic and genital areas and most of the legs (except the left below the knee)'. I am not clear what is thought to have happened to the missing parts. Secondly, the account is interspersed with comments relating to some of the other 690 recorded bog bodies in such a way as to confuse rather than illuminate the description of Lindow Man. Lastly, although many of the illustrations (9 in colour) are beautiful (if disquieting – the looks on the faces of my fellow passengers made me stop reading the book on the train), the photomicrographs are generally of poor quality, for example figures 40, 55, 67 and 70.

Nevertheless Don Brothwell, Reader in Zooarchaeology at the Institute of Archeology, London, has distilled for the discerning public a picture of how modern expertise can make such a macabre discovery give up so many secrets and how this Lindow Man interacts with all the other preserved bodies from around the world. He is doubtless investigating

the next one but I suspect that, like myself, he has a sneaking sympathy with the living victim of Lindow Woman. When her head turned up in 1983 a Mr Reyn-Bardt confessed to murdering his wife 23 years previously – only to hear that Lindow Woman lost her head in 210 AD. C'est la vie.

W.F. Whimster
King's College School
of Medicine and Dentistry,
Denmark Hill,
London SE5 8RX.

Essentials of Thoracic Surgery, Raymond Hurt and Michael Bates, with a chapter by J. Keith Ross. Pp. xii + 270, illustrated. Butterworths, London, Boston, Durban, Singapore, Sydney, Toronto, Wellington, 1986. £24.50.

There will be many who welcome the appearance of this book, based on the excellent course taught by Mr Raymond Hurt and the late Michael Bates at the North Middlesex Hospital for over 20 years. Sadly their unit has now closed, as part of the rationalization of specialist services within the region, but the distillation of their lifetimes clinical experience lives on in this book. The general principles of endoscopy, diagnostic procedures, tube drainage and other aspects of management are covered extremely well. Indications and the important steps in the execution and interpretation of these procedures are carefully explained. About 500 pages each are devoted to surgically relevant lung and oesophageal problems while chest wall, pleural and mediastinal conditions receive separate and detailed consideration. Although there will inevitably be points of disagreement we know that a trainee in the specialty will not rely on a single book as the source of his education and will appreciate differences in policy and the reasons for them. I believe there is so much good teaching in this book that it is an essential for the ward bookcase in any thoracic unit. Its 270 generously illustrated pages, contained within soft covers, constitutes a useful primer for the doctor in training, joining or passing through the specialty. It will also be very suitable for reference by nurses, physiotherapists or other staff whose work brings them into contact with thoracic surgical patients.

One suspects that the inclusion of a 10 page guest chapter on coronary artery surgery with exclusion of all other aspects of cardiac surgery must have been the subject of intense discussion between authors and publishers. It sits alone, unsupported by anything else to do with heart surgery. I am sure there was a reason but for the present it must remain an enigma. As a book on the essentials of (non-cardiac) thoracic surgery this is the best I know and can be recommended most enthusiastically.

T. Treasure
The Middlesex Hospital,
London W1N 8AA.