Book Reviews

ABC of Dermatology, edited by P.K. Buxton. Pp. 91, illustrated. British Medical Journal, London, 1988. £10.95 UK; £13.00 Abroad.

Any attempt at boiling down a subject as wide and varied as dermatology offers itself to the criticism of oversimplification by specialties and intellectual arrogance by generalists. In these articles, published as a series in the *British Medical Journal* and now in book form, Dr Buxton has produced a readable and practical crystal of pleasing clarity and size.

There are some hesitant moments: standardization of the numerous lists and tables and elimination of the odd unhelpful photograph (herpes zoster; page 47, scabies burrows; page 56) would sharpen the presentation.

The practical suggestions are very much those of the Edinburgh department. They are based on long experience, are known to be helpful and are clearly presented.

As a series of individual essays on important clinical dermatological conditions, this book rightfully claims a place on the bookshelves of medical students, general practitioners and general physicians.

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Adult Abnormal Psychology, edited by E. Miller & P.J. Cooper. Pp. x + 380. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, 1988. £29.95.

This volume is intended as a textbook of abnormal psychology suitable for clinical psychology and psychiatry trainees. As such, it fills an important niche, since the main competitors are glossy texts designed for the US student market. The book is structured along conventional lines, with chapters on classification, methodology, and the major psychiatric conditions, together with problems such as drug dependence and problems in the elderly.

The general standard of contributions is very high, with excellent chapters on anxiety, schizophrenia, eating disorders and sexual dysfunction. In keeping with contemporary trends, most authors favour cognitive-behavioural formulations of disorders, as opposed to the learning or social frameworks that might have been preferred a decade ago. There are a few disappointments: the chapter on hysteria is somewhat indecisive, while the historical survey is written in an inflated style and does not adequately cover the areas likely to be of most relevance to readers. I have two more general reservations. The first is that treatment research is deliberately omitted from consideration, on the basis of an arbitrary distinction between 'abnormal' and 'clinical' psychology. This is unfortunate, not only because analysis of mechanisms can benefit from studying the effects of interventions, but also because some of the major recent developments in understanding psychopathology have

emerged primarily from the therapeutic perspective. The second limitation is that biological processes are given short shrift in most chapters (that on anxiety being the honorable exception). Readers should be wary that the overview with which they are presented may be incomplete. Within its scope however, the book can be recommended as a thorough and informed text on abnormal psychology.

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Annual Review of Public Health Vol 9, 1988, edited by Lester Breslow, Jonathan E. Fielding, and Lester B. Lave. Pp. vi + 603. Annual Reviews, Palo Alto, Ca, USA, 1988. \$39 (USA and Canada); \$43 (elsewhere).

The 1988 edition of the US Annual Review of Public Health contains reviews of 22 topics, in the fields of health promotion (5), epidemiology and prevention of specific disease (5), health hazards (4), screening, vaccines, statistical methods and health care delivery (2 topics each). There is nothing on cardiovascular diseases, and of the conditions reviewed, the most prevalent in the US appears to be hunger (20 million Americans). The reviews are long (average 27 pages) for what they have to say, and there is a tendency to document in detail where summary tables would be more concise and clear. The conclusions tend to be cautious. The reviews sometimes avoid discussion of controversies, for example the review of health hazards of passive smoking gives only fleeting mention of Lee's assertion that the disease associations could be produced by a small minority of smokers falsely claiming to be non-smokers, and the review of mumps and other viral vaccines does not consider the problem that a vaccination policy might actually increase overall morbidity if uptake was incomplete (since the non-vaccinated might not get mumps until adulthood, when morbidity is higher).

Overall, the reviews will probably be of relatively little use for those who are already familiar with a topic but may provide a useful and easily available source for those who are not, since the relevant material is documented and the generally accepted interpretation is usually made.

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A Manual of Normal Neonatal Care, N.R.C. Robertson. Pp. xi + 240. Edward Arnold, London, Baltimore, Melbourne, Auckland, 1988. £7.95.

There are now a number of excellent manuals and text books on the care of the pre-term and critically ill full-term baby, including two by Dr Robertson. This manual has been written to aid those providing care for the other 90 to 95% of