Book Reviews

Clinical Autonomic Research, Vol 1, March 1991, Editor-in-Chief C.J. Mathias. Pp. 100, illustrated. Official Journal of the Clinical Autonomic Research Society. Rapid Communications, Oxford.

Clinical Autonomic Research is a new international Journal, the first volume of which appeared in March 1991. Its Editor-in-Chief is Dr C.J. Mathias of St Mary's Hospital, assisted by an eminent and lengthy Editorial Board. The purpose of the Journal is to cover 'the different aspects concerning function of the autonomic nervous system in both normal and diseased man'. Its range is therefore wide since it covers neurology, cardiology, physiology, pharmacology as well as interdisciplinary studies. The first issue aptly reflects the specific aims of the Journal in that it contains a number of original articles describing research in both humans and experimental animals. There is a strong cardiovascular input but also some interesting neurology. The March issue also has a number of succinct short Meeting reports as well as Proceedings and Abstracts of the recent Autonomic Research Society Meeting in London. I found the Short Reports particularly useful and I believe that the combination of original articles, reviews, meeting reports and Proceedings is one that will prove attractive to readers. The Journal is well illustrated and the standard of presentation generally high. I think this is going to prove to be a very useful addition to the current literature on the autonomic nervous system and it should be taken by all good medical libraries.

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Liberating Medicine, David Seedhouse. Pp. xxi + 160. John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, New York, Brisbane, Toronto, Singapore, 1991. Paperback £11.95.

David Seedhouse's book is an essay on uncertainty: uncertainty in scientific knowledge, technical competence, communication, ethics. While a great deal of medical science is as close to certainty as anything can be, much is not and its application is still more uncertain. This simple message is not novel but the author's presentations and subsequent argument certainly are. They make the book an attractive introduction to conceptual problems in medicine for undergraduates and postgraduates alike. After exploring uncertainty in the consulting room and in underlying concepts of normality, health and disease the core of the book discusses a practical model – the rings of uncertainty – that aims to enhance doctors' understanding of their role and of medicine's purpose. He concludes with an account of 'the reasonable doctor' and some of the most helpful insights into the often sterile territory of inter-professional relationships.

Opportunities for discussion are offered throughout and as an intensely practical introduction to medical ethics for student groups can scarcely be bettered. It is equally stimulating to the individual reader. Indeed the only improvement I can suggest for the next edition is a short annotated bibliography covering the main themes, such as 'health' and 'autonomy'. If you want to think about medicine, go and buy it. You too may find it liberating. Strongly recommended.

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Books Received

Atlas en Couleurs de Chirurgie Digestive, vols 1 & 2. Translated into French by Professeur M Guntz. Pp. 896, illustrated. Piccin Nuova Libreria S p A, Padua, 1991. Hardback, 1585F.

Behavior and Medicine, Danny Wedding. Pp. xix + 522, illustrated. Mosby Year Book, St Louis, London, Sydney, Toronto, 1991. Paperback, £25.00.

Drug Discovery – a Casebook and Analysis, Robert A. Maxwell and Shohreh B. Eckhardt. Pp. xxv + 430. Humana Press, Clifton, New Jersey, 1991. Hardback £75.60.

Examining Doctors, Medicine in the 1990s, Donald Gould. Pp. x + 148. Faber and Faber, London, Boston, 1991. Hardback, £12.99.

Free Radicals and Food Additives, edited by Okezie I. Aruoma and Barry Halliwell. Pp. xvii + 200, illustrated. Taylor & Francis, London, New York, Philadelphia, 1991. Hardback, £35.00.

A Guide to Infectious Diseases, M.G. Brook & M.F. McGhee. Pp. 230. Radcliffe Medical Press, Oxford, 1991. Paperback, £12.50.

Medical Audit Primer, Nancy Dixon. Pp. 150. Healthcare Quality Quest, Romsey, Hants, 1991. Paperback, £25.00.

Medical Aspects of Exercise – benefits and risks, Report of the Royal College of Physicians. Pp. 33. Royal College of Physicians, London, 1991. Paperback £7.50.