BOOK REVIEWS


The incidence of cases of acute poisoning by intent or accident is rising progressively in this country, and indeed in all civilised countries. When presented with such a case the admitting doctor has an urgent need for authoritative, dogmatic advice, and this is exactly what this book provides.

The advice given is based on the experience of the authors in the Poisoning Treatment Centre, Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh, and the associated Scottish Poisons Information Bureau. After introductory chapters on the nature and size of the problem, some two important and excellent chapters on the basic supportive treatment of the patient and the measures which may be used to help to eliminate the poison. Then the management of poisoning by barbiturates, carbon monoxide, salicylates, modern psychiatric drugs and non-barbitrate hypnotics is dealt with in some detail, and thereafter briefer notes on poisoning by all commonly used drugs, household substances, and industrial and agricultural chemicals. Psychiatric management and prevention are also discussed. The telephone numbers of all Poisons Information Centres in Britain and Ireland are listed on the cover.

This book is small and reasonably priced, and contains essential information. It should be near to the hand of every doctor who may be faced with a patient suffering from poisoning. C. G. B. DOWNIE


This remarkably compendious book provides sufficiently detailed advice on the management of virtually every medical emergency, and every Medical Centre and hospital O.M.O’s room should have a copy.

A reviewer can criticise it only on points of detail. Pressor drugs are rarely required in the management of acute poisoning and a systolic B.F. of less than 80 mm. Hg is not of itself a reliable guide to the adequacy of the circulation; nor, in barbiturate poisoning, are vitamin B12 and ACTH likely to be useful. The giving of large doses of intravenous thiamine as the sole treatment of cardiovascular beri-beri may precipitate acute left ventricular failure by abruptly raising the peripheral resistance before the myocardium is able to cope with this extra load. Dexamethasone is now standard treatment for intracranial hypertension due to a malignant brain tumour. Renal colic is commonly a constant rather than a spasmodic pain.

B. SIMPSON


This is a well-written and comprehensive monograph by two experienced authors assisted by twelve contributors. The pathophysiology of all types of shock is considered in the first two thirds of the book, and the remainder deals with clinical diagnosis and management. It is convincingly argued that the fundamental defect in shock is a reduction in blood flow, so that tissue perfusion becomes inadequate, with consequent ischaemic injury. Shock is classified under seven casual headings: hypovolaemia, cardiac failure, bacteraemia, hyperpermeability, neurogenic, circulatory obstruction, and endocrine, and each group is then discussed in detail under diagnosis and management.

The value of monitoring the central venous pressure in shock is emphasised, particularly as a guide to fluid replacement, and a simple method of doing this is described. The bibliography is extensive and modern. This book should be read by all doctors in clinical charge of patients. C. G. B. DOWNIE


"The Management of Head Injuries " might have been written for us. Indeed the Author, Consultant Neurological Surgeon to the Army, has a long experience of missile wounds and of the civilian type injuries that army surgeons have treated and evacuated to his care. Mr. Lewin, therefore, is well placed to advise us on the care and evacuation of head injuries.

Discussion on the increasingly complex clinical diagnosis is clear and enthralling. Simple methods of investigation are described in detail, but it is valuable to have discussed the scope and indications for investigations usually only available in Neurosurgical Units. A dogmatic and practical management is given which would provide us with a good and challenging standard. We are guided through the operative procedures that Mr. Lewin would expect us to perform, and are given glimpses of those that should be reserved for a neurosurgical team.

The chapter on missile wounds, and the frequent reference to evacuation of patients are very pertinent to our problems. The dictum that inaccessible missiles should be left must be accepted but the assurance that they are usually self-sterilising is probably incorrect.

It is not my job to comment on the neurosurgical wisdom. I may say, however, that the questions answered are the questions I have so often asked, and that the answers are clear, practical and stimulating. I am sure many surgeons will wish to have their own copy, but this monograph should be in all our libraries.

I. M. CRAN


This edition brings up to date a most useful little book for student health inspectors and others
wishing to acquire the essentials of food inspection in a concise form. The first edition of this book set a high standard which has been more than maintained in this edition.  

T. C. R. ARCHER


Those of us who were privileged to hear Sir Graham deliver his Heath Clark lectures last November have been eagerly awaiting the publication of this book in which they appear in expanded form. It gives a fully documented account of the accidents and complications following immunisation and is the result of painstaking research into the open literature and unpublished records. Some of the incidents were so serious that they will long be remembered. Others, less well publicised, have been forgotten. It should be studied by everyone engaged in general practice and particularly by Service medical officers.  

In a recent review of Parish's History of Immunisation attention was drawn to the number of army officers who figured in the bibliography. It is again a matter of congratulation that in the exhaustive list of references Sir Graham musters, so few Service officers appear. Indeed it is a remarkable fact that the Services, although pioneers in the practice of immunisation and the production of vaccines, have been fortunate in experiencing few untoward events and one has to search the book carefully to find them. I am sure Sir Graham, who has had access to all the confidential reports on immunisation procedures during the many years he has served on the Army Pathology Advisory Committee, would not have overlooked anything worthy of note.  

But this is no excuse for complacency and in seeking new vaccines and techniques of administration it is as well to reflect on the stories recounted here. That of the Colonel who insisted on having multiple vaccinations on the same day with a fatal sequel is one of the few incidents for which the author does not give chapter and verse. Nevertheless it serves to highlight the importance of resisting pressure to "concertina" vaccination programmes for administrative convenience. Even sterile disposable syringes, it seems, are not devoid of risk. The report of abscesses following their use shows the importance of careful handling and using the "no touch technique" for fitting the needles. Constant vigilance over manufacture is also vital and I for my part would have had more sleepless nights if I had read this book before commanding the David Bruce Laboratories. 

The conclusion that most of the vaccines we use "do a great deal more good than harm" is comforting and it is a relief to have Sir Graham's assurance that he is not after all an anti-vaccinationist in view of the dominant role he has played in guiding Service immunisation policy over the years!  

M. H. P. SAYERS


Whilst the main content of this latest book of Dr. John Rawlings Rees, concerns the history of the formation and development of the World Federation for Mental Health, there are Chapters on the author's personal life, on his experiences before World War II as the Medical Director of the Tavistock Clinic and then as the wartime Consulting Psychiatrist to the Army.  

A renowned conversationalist, it was quite remarkable how little J. R. Rees revealed about his personal self, so that those who have met him and now read his Reflections, will be much intrigued with J.R. as autobiographer. Service readers will find his story of the development of Army Psychiatry during World War II of special interest. There is a frank account of its early preoccupation with purely clinical problems and later in the development of psychiatric contributions in the fields of personnel selection, placement, morale, discipline and training. It is true to say that at the end of the war the official Army attitudes to these matters had undergone a transformation. Nowadays, these principles are accepted by Army Officers as commonplace (or "commonsense") and they permeate the Army's thinking and management. Indeed the principles of Army preventative psychiatry and its applications were widely adopted after the war into industry and by the armed forces of other countries. 

But as Dr. Rees reminds us in his book these new ideas were not accepted without considerable official opposition and even hostility. It says a great deal for his able intellect, his toughness of personality and for his drive that J.R. achieved so much in so many spheres. Yet in the telling of his story he is restrained and modest and this reflects one of Jack Rees' more remarkable characteristics, his ability to handle opposition with an unruffled patience matched only with a native tenacity. But most of all J.R. in his book impresses as a great lover of people, a staunch believer in the individual identity and by his dedicated championing of community and later of international mental health.  

The success of his achievement in the fields of preventative psychiatry in the Army provided the inspiration and the impetus to put these principles to the test in the international field. The main chapters in this book describe the birth of the World Federation for Mental Health. No one is better equipped to write this story and J.R. does it with that meticulous, but lively style so typical of all his work. Two long appendices at the end make somewhat heavy reading but have value as a record of the many activities of the WFMH and of its publications.  

The Army and in particular Army Psychiatry owes much to the devoted and inspiring work of its wartime Consulting Psychiatrist. It is very fitting that in the year of the publication of this work that the first J. R. Rees Medal will be awarded as the prize in Army Psychiatry to the Post-Graduate Courses at the Royal Army Medical College.  

J. F. D. MURPHY