

## Medicine and Books

### Unhappy families

*Family Matters: Perspectives on the Family and Social Policy.* Ed Alfred White Franklin. (Pp 209; £9.95.) Pergamon Press on behalf of the Royal Society of Medicine. 1983.

*Family Matters* is the record of a symposium held at the Royal Society of Medicine in November 1981. Three of the 22 contributors are medical doctors, 11 are sociologists, two social anthropologists, and two housing specialists. There is one representative each from the law, education, the voluntary organisations, and politics. The book is therefore almost wholly about the family and social policy in relation to the family as seen by sociologists and "parasociologists." Although the editor is a paediatrician and family problems concern the paediatrician as much as any doctor and more than most, I found many of the chapters quite heavy going. The style, like that of much writing on sociology, often provides an instant cure for insomnia. One example will suffice: "What constitutes an accident is a product of a large number of situational contingencies." This means, I suppose, "many things make an accident."

The book documents facts about the lives of families in Britain, many of which are disturbing: more than one in four new marriages will probably end in divorce; one in six children can expect to see their parents divorced before they are 16; in 1980 there were an estimated 920 000 one parent families in Britain, included in which were one and a half million children, and more than 12% of children can expect to live in a one parent family at some time; over half of one parent families are living in poverty; some 1.8 million households have unsatisfactory living conditions; 10 million people are said to live in poverty; one in five large families and one in three one parent families are very poor; at any one time about 7% of all children will be in local authority care. No feeling person could fail to be moved by such statistics about our society but, although it is undoubtedly necessary and valuable to demonstrate the problem it is much more difficult to provide an answer. One author lists a variety of recommendations: more money for poor families, money for mothers at home with children to compensate for lost earnings, financial advice for families, better public housing, more sex education, more health education and more health visitors, concentration on the needs of young people. A modern caring society should provide all these things, but the extent of such provision is, of course, a political decision. It is a question of where to draw the line and it should not be assumed that the answers are effective any more than it may be assumed that a new drug is effective against disease.

Any paediatrician is well aware that one of the gravest of congenital handicaps is to be born to inadequate parents. Equality of opportunity must be forever a mirage for many babies who draw a short straw in the parental lottery. Is there anything that society can do about it? Michael Freeman, a lawyer, contributes a discussion of the pros and cons of state intervention that makes fascinating reading for a paediatrician. Do feckless parents have a right to be left alone to bring up children "in their own image" or does society, meaning the ruling middle class, have a right to enforce its own values? Again the question is where to draw the line; a policy of total intervention or of total non-intervention would be acceptable to nobody. Interestingly, the book quotes evidence that intervention

of social workers may actually aggravate the problem of juvenile delinquency and that child abuse may increase after "anxious visiting by social workers." The question of congenital defects and the ethical problems of their management is discussed with reference to British and American cases. Are doctors and parents competent to make all the necessary decisions? Do other health and social service workers have a part to play? When should the courts be used? These questions cannot have absolute answers but it is to be hoped that public discussion of the issues, backed by the slow emergence of a body of case law, will allow the gradual formation of a consensus on issues on which opinions at present tend to be polarised.

Two chapters are devoted to housing policy, and again political issues come to the fore. Many authors express concern that the sale of council houses will result in less and less choice of housing for families in need. The point is made that prejudice in the allocation of council housing tends to discriminate against those who are already the most disadvantaged. This must be true but it seems to be carrying things a little far to say "there is a subconscious prejudice among council tenants against" (among others) "unsocial families who do not pay rent or who cause nuisance." It must be easier to be liberal about the behaviour of other people's neighbours than about that of one's own.

Much else in the book will interest all who have a concern for the social health of Britain. Unfortunately, the printing is very poor. The publishers say that the reason for this is the need to publish quickly; this seems to me to be no excuse. The front cover is an enigma. I can understand the line drawings of a mother with a pram, a family group, and a teacher and children, but how did the ENT surgeon dictating to his secretary get in there?

D P ADDY

### Impulses in the heart

*The Conduction System of the Heart.* M J Davies, R H Anderson, and A E Becker. (Pp 337; £40.) Butterworths. 1982.

Professor Davies first published a monograph on the normal and pathological anatomy of the human cardiac conduction system in 1971, and his new book reflects the many advances since then. His two coauthors widen the scope of the book with their extensive experience of the pathology of congenital heart disease, bringing together in one volume a vast array of information.

The first three chapters outline the historical aspects of the study of the conduction tissues, their anatomy and blood supply. These topics have attained considerable importance since the growth of cardiac surgery has led to the risk of direct surgical damage. Elegant anatomical studies of the vascular supply to the sinoatrial node, atrioventricular node, and the bundle of His and its branches are illustrated.

The chapters on the embryology of the conduction tissues and the conduction system in congenital heart disease will be of particular interest to paediatric cardiologists and cardiac surgeons, who have to interpret the electrocardiogram and avoid surgical damage to the conducting system when operating on children with complex congenital heart disease. The authors

discuss in detail topics such as the avoidance of damage to the sinus node during Mustard's operation and the disposition of the atrioventricular conducting tissue in the various types of ventricular septal defect. For those not possessing specialised knowledge of congenital heart disease, however, these chapters may be difficult to follow.

The remaining chapters of the book review the morphological changes in congenital complete atrioventricular block, the pre-excitation syndromes, atrial arrhythmias, atrioventricular conduction disturbances during acute myocardial infarction, chronic atrioventricular block and bundle branch block, the effects of systemic disease on the conduction system, and the pathology of sudden cardiac death. These chapters are written with constant reference to the clinical disturbances of the conduction system, the pathological correlates of abnormal electrocardiographic patterns, and an anatomical interpretation of the findings of intracardiac electrophysiological studies. The absence of a morphological basis for specialised tracts linking the sinoatrial and atrioventricular nodes or for changes consistent with bypass tracts in the atrioventricular node are discussed and the evidence cited. Though in these cases there are functional findings without an anatomical basis, in other disorders, such as the loss of atrial myocardial cells, atrophy and amyloid deposition in the sinoatrial node and atrial myocardium with increasing age, the pathological changes are clearly far more common than the clinical syndrome of sinoatrial disease or atrial fibrillation. Similarly, many "bypass tracts," particularly between the atrioventricular node or His's bundle and the septal ventricular myocardium appear to be clinically silent.

The chapter on disturbances of atrioventricular conduction in acute myocardial infarction emphasises the differences between atrioventricular block in inferior myocardial infarction, with little morphological damage to the atrioventricular node, and atrioventricular block in anterior infarction, which is associated with a large area of septal infarction affecting both bundle branches and associated with a poor prognosis. In contrast, the authors emphasise the relative rarity of severe coronary artery disease in patients with chronic atrioventricular block or sinoatrial diseases, which explains the good prognosis of these patients with permanent cardiac pacing.

The book is clearly written and profusely illustrated, although it is irritating at times to find the text and the illustration several pages out of phase. Inevitably a specialised text, it should be of value to pathologists, paediatric and adult cardiologists, and cardiac surgeons. As a reference book it deserves a place in the library of any unit dealing regularly with abnormalities of cardiac conduction or complex arrhythmias.

S M COBBE

## Treating acutely injured patients

*The Basis and Practice of Traumatology.* Ed Sean Hughes. (Pp 217; £17.50.) William Heinemann Medical Books. 1983.

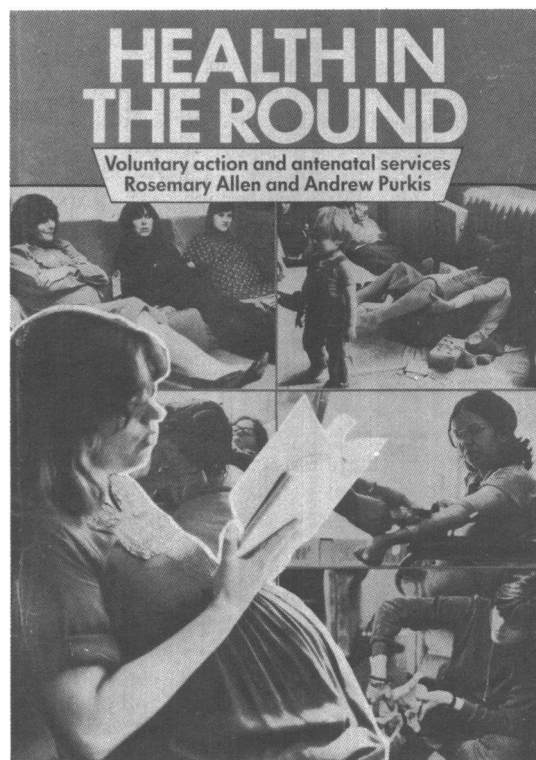
*The Basis and Practice of Traumatology* is "intended to provide a stimulus to undergraduate students and a basis for postgraduate students." Its compact size must mean that it cannot contain the depth of detail sought by the specialist trainee. The contributors have omitted such detail quite deliberately and have aimed instead to produce a broader view. I found the first 90 pages most attractive. The experienced contributors achieve a most refreshing clarity in these eight chapters on the physiological response to trauma and the management of burns, chest injuries, head injuries, bullet wounds, and blast. Whether from the point of view of the student seeking a first introduction or the more experienced reader seeking a readable review, these sections succeed admirably.

The next 125 pages contain an account of the management of fractures and dislocations. There are 11 separate chapters from seven distinguished contributors, among them two professors of

orthopaedics and four lecturers. The plurality of authorship leads to some loss of the continuity of theme that was such an attractive feature of the earlier single author sections. For example, in management of fractures the ultimate target must be healthy and rapid restoration of soft tissues and not of bone alone, but this principle tends to become obscured in very elegant accounts of alternative techniques and specific injuries and in some personal philosophies. This half of the book is therefore most likely to be useful to a student not as an introduction to, but as a companion for, his time actually with the fracture team (when guidance is readily to hand) and for revision.

The book will prove most useful for undergraduates when they encounter the acutely injured patient. The emphasis is on injured

One of the big problems with antenatal care is that those who stand to benefit most from it don't get it. Why it is that the very young, the single, women from ethnic minorities, and women with financial or social problems don't attend for regular antenatal care is clearly analysed in *Health in the Round* by Rosemary Allen and Andrew Purkis (£4.95, Bedford Square Press). But this is not just another report bashing the antenatal services for being impersonal and disorganised. The main thrust is to argue that voluntary organisations could play a big part in antenatal care by supporting and monitoring statutory services, and by providing services of their own. Almost half of this clearly written and well presented book is devoted to describing 41



existing voluntary projects that are trying to improve antenatal services. One of the most impressive is the Arbour Schoolgirl Project in Liverpool, which makes contact with pregnant schoolgirls, supports them, provides school education, and teaches the girls about pregnancy, birth, and looking after babies. Another is the Barrack House Health Education and Language Project in Leeds, which works with another deprived group—mothers who don't speak English. This group works with statutory authorities, produces a pack for the women, and organises health groups. The authors of the report, who are from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, say that they hope that doctors and health authorities will cooperate with voluntary groups and not see them as critics or competitors.



bone and joint, which is precisely where it should be for students today when such problems form an ever increasing part of current surgical practice. It is a readable and well presented volume, in which a variety of opinions are stated with clarity and will be remembered without difficulty. It is this the student will find most valuable.

DAVID REYNOLDS

## Photographic guide for surgeons

*A Colour Atlas of Upper Gastrointestinal Surgery.* Charles Grant Clark. (Pp 168; £50.) Wolfe Medical Publications. 1983.

Any surgeon who has experienced the keen disappointment of examining operative photographs that bear little or no resemblance to his recollection of reality will be impressed by the uniformly high quality of the colour reproductions in this book. The book is part of the series of Wolfe atlases and does not depart in any way from the excellence of their photographic standard. The author allows the photographs to tell their own story with a minimum of help from the text, and in general the approach succeeds. The book is restricted to upper gastrointestinal surgery, and extends from insertion of a Celestin tube and repair of hiatal hernia down the gastrointestinal tract as far as Meckel's diverticulum and bypass operations for obesity. It does not set out to deal with biliary tract surgery, and the pancreas is mentioned only in the context of cystogastrostomy for the management of pseudocysts.

As the author states in his preface, the operations depicted are those which he performs regularly with techniques that he has developed over the years. The description of truncal vagotomy is excellent but many would now regard the operation of selective vagotomy as obsolete and not worthy of seven expensive pages. The photographs of highly selective vagotomy cannot be faulted, but the text may prove difficult to follow for the uninitiated and the trainee may be confused by the instruction to identify and cut the anterior vagus nerve. Many surgeons find a sternal retractor helpful in gaining optimal exposure for this and other operations in and around the gastro-oesophageal junction.

The section on vagotomy is a good illustration of the difficulties that surround all descriptions and static demonstrations of operative technique. There can be no substitute for practical experience, and I have no doubt that the author is as much a devotee of the apprentice system in surgical training as I am. All would agree that surgical training can be enhanced by supporting textbooks but for my money the line drawing with adequate text has the greatest educational value. I accept, however, the author's premise that such drawings are less realistic and that the surgeon with some experience of assisting will be able to follow the essential steps of the various operations from the photographs in this atlas.

Presumably the book is aimed at the "surgeon with some experience of assisting." Surgeons about to start training will be better served by a more comprehensive volume with more discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of various operative approaches, while the established gastrointestinal surgeon will appreciate, but will not necessarily buy, this work. This is not to say that the novice and the consultant will fail to derive benefit from the illustrations of Professor Clark's technique.

The book is remarkably free from editorial errors. All book reviewers struggle to find some spelling mistakes if only to reassure the readers that they have read the book. I could find only a token mistake or two but fear that Heineke and Mikulicz will not be well pleased with their treatment. These trivial comments aside, this is a work of the highest quality. It will be admired as a great technical achievement, it should be bought by all surgical libraries, and it should be examined by all gastrointestinal surgeons, who may or may not decide to spend their money elsewhere.

D C CARTER

## Complex moral issues

*Medicine, Morals and the Law.* Sheila McLean and Gerry Maher. (Pp 214; £12.50.) Gower. 1983.

For many years the principles enshrined in the Hippocratic Oath have served as a sound basis for a code of conduct for medical practitioners. By and large doctors' adherence to these principles has led patients to believe that their medical advisors would always act in their interests, would respect their confidences, and would to the best of their abilities make the difficult decisions often required.

Recent medical and technical developments have complicated many of the issues of life and of death and illness, and the medical profession and its attitudes to these issues have become the focus of public attention and controversy. In vitro fertilisation and life support systems beg the questions of when life begins and ends. Early diagnosis of fetal abnormalities requires value judgments on the quality of life.

*Medicine, Morals and the Law* sets out to explain these and other issues facing medicine from the perspective of morals and the law. The authors emphasise that the discussion is aimed at the general reader and therefore deep and controversial arguments of law and philosophy have been dealt with rather briefly. The first chapter deals with the sanctity of life; it discusses different attitudes and uncovers many inconsistencies in general thought but only highlights the complexities of the subject. Other chapters cover abortion, euthanasia, termination of treatment, consent, experimentation, sterilisation and contraception, negligence, confidentiality, and decision making in medicine.

All these subjects are of interest and importance to the general public and are especially interesting to those studying and practising medicine; but the book is so difficult to read. Key information seems to get lost in pages of heavy prose. Repeatedly, long sentences have to be read and reread and at the end of a paragraph or chapter there emerges no clear picture of the problems discussed and certainly no guidelines for clarifying the issues or for making decisions. There must be a better way to put this book together. The many interesting and relevant observations and references included are not presented in a digestible form. The print used has the appearance of a typed draft that does not make reading easy, and many pages have no breaks or headings. One feels sympathetic to Alice's observation "What is the use of a book without pictures or conversations."<sup>1</sup>

As it stands I do not think many doctors or members of the lay public will find this book of value, which is a pity because we all need information on these carefully selected topics and guidance on our attitudes to such increasingly important issues. I hope the authors will consider these comments as constructive and will restyle and clarify the text.

DIANA BRINKLEY

### Reference

- <sup>1</sup> Carroll L. *Alice's adventures in wonderland.* Englewood-Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968.

### Contributors

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## Some new titles

### Symposia and conference proceedings

*National Cancer Institute Monographs*. No 61. "Third International Symposium: Cancer Therapy by Hyperthermia, Drugs, and Radiation." [Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, 22-26 June 1980.] Ed Lyle A Dethlefsen. (Pp 550; from the Superintendent of Documents, US Government Printing Office, Washington DC 20402. NIH publication number 82-2437.) National Institutes of Health. 1982.

*New Perspectives in Clinical Microbiology*. Vol 5. "Evaluation and Management of Hospital Infections." [Noordwijkerhout, Netherlands, 26-27 March 1982.] Ed Ralph van Furth. (Pp 266; Dfl 90.) Martinus Nijhoff. 1982.

*Occupational Asthma: Proceedings of a Society of Occupational Medicine Research Panel Symposium*. [10 December 1981.] Ed A J M Slovak. (Pp 46; available from the publisher price £3.25 including postage (£4.25 overseas).) Society of Occupational Medicine. 1982.

*Osteoporosis*. [International symposium, Jerusalem Osteoporosis Centre, June 1981.] Ed J Menczel, G C Robin, M Makin, and R Steinberg. (Pp 440; £24.95.) John Wiley and Sons. 1982.

*Pediatric and Adolescent Endocrinology*. Vol 10. "Psychological Aspects of Diabetes in Children and Adolescents." [Fifth international Beilinson symposium, Herzliya-on-Sea, Israel, 25-30 October 1981, part 1.] Ed Zvi Laron and Avinoam Galatzer. (Pp 248; DM 220.) Karger. 1982.

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*Progress in Biochemical Pharmacology*. Vol 19. "Nutrition and Cardiovascular Disease." [US-Italy symposium, Rome, December 1980.] Ed R J Hegyeli. (Pp 314; DM 277.) Karger. 1982.

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*Marriages in Trouble: the Process of Seeking Help*. Julia Brannen and Jean Collard. (Pp 266; £13.50.) Tavistock Publications. 1982.

*Medical Ethics*. Peter Doherty. (Pp 82; available from Dr K P Roche, White Lodge, Radnor Road, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol BS9 4DX; donation of £1 to the guild towards the cost of the booklet may be made to Dr J C Gallagher, 35 Church Lane, Normanton, W Yorks WF6 1AD.) Guild of Catholic Doctors. 1982.

*Medical Research Council Handbook 1982-83*. (Pp 330; £5.50.) Medical Research Council. 1982.

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*Multiple Sclerosis: a Handbook of Information Sources*. Compiled by Jill Russell. (Pp 17; £1.50.) Wessex Regional Library and Information Service. 1982.

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### New editions

*Laboratory Techniques in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology*. "An Introduction to Radioimmunoassay and Related Techniques." Revised, enlarged edition. T Chard. (Pp 284; Dfl 170 hardback, Dfl 65 paperback.) Elsevier Biomedical Press. 1982.

*Manual of Anesthesia*. 2nd edn. John C Snow. (Pp 434; \$16.95.) Little, Brown, and Company. 1982.

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*Manual of Neurologic Therapeutics: With Essentials of Diagnosis*. 2nd edn. Ed Martin A Samuels. (Pp 461; \$16.95.) Little, Brown, and Company. 1982.

*Manual of Neurological Nursing*. 2nd edn. Nancy Swift-Bandini. (Pp 181; \$13.95.) Little, Brown, and Company. 1982.

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*Medical Radiation Biology*. 2nd edn. Donald J Pizzarello and Richard L Witcofski. (Pp 164; \$20.25.) Lea and Febiger. 1982.

*No Change: a Biological Revolution for Women*. 2nd edn. Wendy Cooper. (Pp 188. £1.60.) Arrow Books. 1983.

*Paracelsus: an Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance*. 2nd edn. Walter Pagel. (Pp 399; DM 166; \$83.25.) Karger. 1982.

*Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology*. 2nd edn. S Jean Herriot Emans and Donald Peter Goldstein. (Pp 354; \$31.50.) Little, Brown, and Company. 1982.

*Pediatric Neurology for the House Officer*. 2nd edn. Howard L Weiner, Michael J Bresnan, and Lawrence P Levitt. (Pp 227; £6.25.) Williams and Wilkins. 1982.

*Principles of Pediatric Fluid Therapy*. 2nd edn. Robert W Winters. (Pp 190; \$18.75.) Little, Brown, and Company. 1982.