

Reviews

MECHANISMS OF HYPERTENSION

Mechanisms of Hypertension: With a Consideration of Atherosclerosis. By Henry Alfred Schroeder, M.D., F.A.C.P. (Pp. 379+xv; 67s. 6d.) Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1957.

Dr. Schroeder has already given us previous monographs on hypertension. Recent years have shown that the more severe forms of hypertension are yielding to vigorous treatment by antihypertensive drugs. This experience is causing general physicians to take a closer interest in the possibilities of treatment of this disorder. In spite of the simplicity of its recognition, we know relatively little about its aetiology. Dr. Schroeder approaches the aetiological problem as one of considerable complexity, and he discusses the various factors with a very thorough documentation of the literature. Such matters as inheritance and heredity, neurogenic mechanisms, renal mechanisms, and the possible place of trace metals in the aetiology of the disorder are fully discussed. Atherosclerosis is such a constant accompaniment of hypertension after middle life that it gets a chapter to itself, including a discussion of some of the recent theories concerning the role of fat and other lipids in its production. Thereafter the book concludes with some discussion on treatment by modern drugs, including various combinations of drugs.

The whole monograph is one of closely argued reasoning, and the author does not shrink from giving us his own personal views and personal interpretations of the complex mechanisms involved. Time will tell whether or not these are acceptable. No physician interested in the subject can afford not to consult this monograph. He will find in it many views and opinions which may be novel, complex, and even highly speculative, but we must admire Dr. Schroeder for the courage with which he is prepared to put forward hypotheses. A courageous attempt at synthesis of some of the available information is ultimately more helpful to progress of our understanding than a defeatist attitude based on confusion. The book will be a valuable contribution to the ultimate understanding of a complex and highly important medical problem.

J. MCMICHAEL.

LIFE INSURANCE MEDICINE IN THE U.S.A.

Life Insurance and Medicine: The Prognosis and Underwriting of Disease. Edited by Harry E. Ungerleider, M.D., F.A.C.P., and Richard S. Gubner, M.D., F.A.C.P. (Pp. 994+xviii; illustrated. £6 5s.) Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1958.

This book is derived from a series of lectures given under the auspices of the Board of Life Insurance Medicine in the U.S.A., presumably to actual or potential "medical directors" of life assurance companies and lay underwriters. It is a postgraduate course in the "Specialty of Life Insurance Medicine" by 54 contributors, actuaries and physicians. There are four sections—on "Fundamentals of Life Insurance," "Non-medical Aspects," "Medical Aspects," and "Accident and Health Insurance."

The general insurance principles set out in the first two parts apply with equal force in Great Britain as in the United States, but many of the techniques used to solve the problems do not. Since these techniques are

sometimes interwoven with the principles, the going for the British reader is often heavy. Many British readers will be interested in the principles and application of the Numerical Rating System widely used in the American life offices. In these sections there is much overlapping between chapters and no little inconsistency as between authors—a feature which is permissible, even desirable, in a series of lectures, but a blemish in a textbook. The section on "Medical Aspects" occupies more than half of the book and almost constitutes a textbook on internal medicine. There are several admirable chapters, notably those on blood pressure, overweight, and peptic ulcer, in which the respective authors, keeping themselves within their terms of reference, have discussed with full statistical data the mortality significance of these very common impairments. In others of the medical chapters, however, the authors stray into clinical medicine and even therapeutics, failing to make very effective contributions to these subjects and often failing, chiefly for lack of the necessary statistical information, to offer the firm prognostic information which the editors in their introduction lead the reader to expect.

The collection of a series of lectures within the static covers of a book requires stronger and more ruthless editing than this book has enjoyed. While some chapters are a joy to read, the writing is for the most part undistinguished and some of it is very bad. Surely it should be possible for authors, and editors, at least to agree on whether "data" should be treated as a singular or a plural noun, even if they are wrong. The book is finely produced with handsome type on good paper, but it weighs 4 pounds avoirdupois.

J. G. M. HAMILTON.

SEX FOR THE ADOLESCENT

He and She. By Kenneth C. Barnes. (Pp. 207; illustrated. 10s. 6d.) London: Darwen Finlayson. 1958.

Drawing on his experience as headmaster of a co-educational boarding-school, and being assisted by his wife and his medically qualified daughter, Mr. Barnes has produced one of the best of the many books designed to educate the adolescent in sex which I have read. It gives the necessary information on sex anatomy and physiology, and tackles with courage and without the mincing of words many matters of detail which for ever raise questions in the mind of youth but which are so often side-stepped by generalizations and stereotyped phrases.

The author concentrates on rationalizing those codes of conduct laid down by society against which it is natural for the adolescent to wish to rebel. The easy arguments put forward to justify departures from the accepted conventions are taken up and answered. The overpowering strength of the sex urge, and the consequent ease with which any member of the community can lose self-respect and the respect of a heterosexual friend, is emphasized. Therefore, the writer argues, relations between youthful individuals of opposite sex should be based on common intellectual interests and pastimes, and physical contacts which might lead to uncontrollable impulses should be deliberately and consciously avoided.

Mr. Barnes largely succeeds in not giving the impression of preaching. Rather does he map out situations which raise questions, leaving the reader—whom he treats as an adult—to answer them. His book