

# Medicine and Books

## Young suicides

*Suicide in the Young*. Ed Howard S Sudak, Amasa B Ford, and Norman B Rushforth. (Pp 445; £31.50.) Wright PSG. 1984.

Suicide in the young is, in principle, a major preventable cause of death. This American book draws on diverse sources to make clear how little we know about the subject.

The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys provides useful background information for a consideration of this book. Firstly, in the table of the five main causes of death at different ages in England and Wales in 1980 suicide appeared once: it was the third commonest cause of death in the age group 15-44 years. In that age group suicide accounted for 10% of all male deaths and 7% of all female deaths. Secondly, provisional figures for 1982 show that in the age group 15-34 years suicide was, again, the third commonest cause of death (after accidents and cancer). Lastly, over the past few years, up to 1983, the suicide rate in the age group 5-14 years has been of the order of one per million population for males and females alike; while in the age group 15-24 years the suicide rates have been calculated to be roughly 65 per million of the male population, and just over 20 per million of the female population. Thereafter rates rise with age. These findings indicate the extent of the health problem associated with suicide in young people. This problem has received insufficient attention.

The editors of *Suicide in the Young* have assembled a complicated and varied text, written by 44 contributors, consisting of 25 chapters, and divided into three main sections: epidemiology/aetiology; diagnosis; and prevention, intervention, and "postvention"—the counselling of the family and friends of suicides. Roughly half the material is based on empirical work. The rest is a mixture of the clinical and the theoretical, much of which is, unfortunately, psychoanalytically oriented.

The first section begins with an exposition of the relation between suicide and age and an examination of the relation between mortality rates for suicide, homicide, motor vehicle accidents, and non-motor vehicle accidents, and population changes among adolescents and young adults. Data from Ohio, USA, support the hypothesis that increased suicide rates in adolescents and young adults are significantly positively correlated with the increased proportions of individuals in these age groups in the total population. It appears that the percentage increase in deaths from suicide among young non-white males, specifically black males, has exceeded that of young white males for over a decade (through the 1970s). Moreover, the percentage of all deaths from suicide in people under the age of 25 years is greater for both sexes for non-whites in general, and for blacks in particular, than it is among whites. Interestingly, however, teenage suicides seem not to be strongly influenced by temporal factors. Furthermore, data based on United States national morbidity statistics from 1968 to 1977 question that suicide rates increase at specific ages in youth and that physiological changes in puberty are primarily responsible for the increase in suicide rates. Other papers are concerned with attempted suicide, biological factors and pharmacological treatment in childhood and adolescent depression, and methods for investigating suicide in children and adolescents.

The second section deals with the clinical interview evaluation of suicidal potential in children and the structured assessment of psychiatric diagnosis (and of psychological function and supports) in adolescence. Research on the relation between psychiatric diagnosis and a history of attempted suicide in adolescent inpatients

suggests that some dysthymic adolescents suffer from a more malignant type of affective disorder than is generally appreciated. Preliminary findings also suggest that adolescents who manifest depressive disorder and "borderline" personality disorder may be especially prone to suicide. The variables most closely associated with suicidal outcome in a sample of male adolescents included clear communication of intent, actively seeking help (in those who had made a suicidal attempt), feelings of hopelessness, and apathy/psychomotor retardation. Some of the major difficulties in assessing depression and suicide in the young are then considered; emphasis is given to primary detection by those who are concerned in the primary care of the young, the value of the "psychological reconstruction" of completed suicide in childhood and adolescence, and the relevance of "subintentional suicide behaviour"—indirect self destructive behaviour such as alcohol and drug abuse.

The final section is concerned with the treatment of children and adolescents who attempt suicide, with respect to psychotherapy, cognitive therapy, group counselling, family therapy, and intervention and "postvention" in schools. The role of psychotropic medication is discussed only briefly. Two of the authors conclude: "Well designed treatment studies are almost nonexistent in the literature.... There is a great need for additional research in the treatment of the young suicide attempter."

GREG WILKINSON

## Old people fighting disease

*Medicine in Old Age*. "Immunology and Infection in the Elderly." Ed Roy A Fox. (Pp 379; £23.) Churchill Livingstone. 1984.

*Immunology and Infection in the Elderly* is excellent and highlights differences from conventional medical teaching based on younger patients. Roughly two thirds of the text deals with specific aspects of infection; most of this is readable and full of good clinical sense seen against the background of normal defence against infection. Normal defence is specifically covered by chapters on immunology—about a quarter of the book—and the chapters on infection are well backed up by relevant material on host defence.

The general approach and style are consistent, which reflects the fact that the editor is also an author on half the chapters. The few weaknesses of this book lie in some of the chapters in which he is not concerned. The chapter on pulmonary infections was rather thin and disappointing, whereas that on tuberculosis was disproportionately long and diffuse. The attempt to draw together the clinical and immunological threads in a chapter on immunisation was a good idea, but sadly its treatment is rambling and unimaginative. Similarly, the chapters on clinical pharmacology are repetitive and less than challenging, but they are workmanlike and their pallor is more by contrast with the rest.

The remaining chapters are comprehensive and stimulating; the clinical chapters are pervaded by the recognition that things are not quite what they seem in elderly people. Those on immunology provide excellent and readable summaries of current knowledge relevant to clinical practice and would grace any book on host defence. It is sad, but a true reflection of the state of the art, that the authors have to say so often that not much is known about the immunology of the elderly human being. Also, some of the quoted

work pays scant attention to the intrinsic problem of studying the immunology of the highly selected healthy elderly person. These people have run the gauntlet of life: their very survival indicates that they may not represent the state that underlies the diseases suffered by their less healthy peers. This book, however, does justice to current knowledge and may unreservedly be commended to physicians working with the elderly and to students on geriatric attachment. Many others might benefit from its clinical and scientific wisdom.

A J PINCHING

## Focus on pancreatic disease

*Pancreatic Pathology.* Günter Klöppel and Philipp U Heitz. (Pp 239; £28.) Churchill Livingstone. 1984.

The incidence of carcinoma of the exocrine pancreas is said to be increasing in the West and is now the fourth commonest cause of death from cancer in American men. Many books dedicated to gastrointestinal disease have been published in recent years, and, though there has been much research and writing on endocrine tumours of the pancreas, the exocrine organ has generally been ignored. In addition, pancreatic biopsy is now on the increase, and so it was with considerable interest and anticipation that I received this book devoted entirely to disease of the pancreas.

It is divided into virtually two equal parts, one dealing with the exocrine pancreas and the other with the endocrine portion. Apart from a chapter by Professor Tony Pearce discussing the amine precursor uptake decarboxylation (APUD) concept all chapters are written by contributors from Switzerland or Germany. The coverage is comprehensive—atomy and physiology, congenital anomalies, cysts, and pancreatic biopsy in addition to pancreatitis, diabetes mellitus, persistent infantile hypoglycaemia, and tumours. I found the text laboured, with the historical development of knowledge in the subject spelt out in a pedantic manner, listing many of the papers concerned rather than giving the author's view. This, coupled with areas of very obvious translation into English, misspelling, and the use of such Latin terms as "ductus cysticus" and "ductus choledochus" all made for difficulties in reading.

*Pancreatic Pathology* is printed on good paper and has some excellent photographs and electron micrographs, many informative tables, and a comprehensive bibliography. At £28 it is good value for these days, and in the absence of any effective competitor I would recommend it as a most useful and important reference book for medical libraries and departments of histopathology

I D ANSELL

## Films of trauma

*Clinics in Emergency Medicine.* "Radiology in Emergency Medicine." Ed Murray K Dalinka and Jeremy J Kaye. (Pp 364; £35.) Churchill Livingstone. 1984.

The term "emergency medicine" covers a large subject, and it is a pity that the editors did not define their subject more clearly and restrict it to trauma. There are contributions in this book from 24 radiologists, mostly from the radiology departments of the Universities of Pennsylvania and Vanderbilt. Editorial control is apparent—the text has a concise and uniform style and is well laid out so that it is easy to use as a reference book. There is much good clinical as well as radiological information, and at the end of each chapter there is an up to date selection of references. In the preface the authors do not mention the aims of this book, and it does not seem to be obviously intended for the radiologist or for the casualty officer or house surgeon.

Nine of the 14 chapters deal with trauma topographically—for

example, facial trauma, cervical spine injuries, lower limb injuries, and abdominal injuries. The other chapters include ultrasound and computed tomography in medical emergencies, chest radiology, angiography, non-traumatic paediatric emergencies, and pitfalls in diagnosis. The short sections on ultrasound, computed tomography, and angiography seem to conflict with the topographical approach elsewhere. The radiologist, and more likely the casualty officer, reading up a particular clinical condition or injury will find this fragmented approach confusing, especially as there are no cross references.

Two thirds of the chapter on chest radiology is on non-traumatic aspects, with trauma covered only briefly, and the greater part of the chapter on abdominal injuries is on acute non-traumatic problems. More coverage might have been given to trauma, and even though there are good accounts of the non-traumatic aspects, radiologists need greater detail and more depth than there is here. For example, it is suggested that for lower gastrointestinal bleeding nuclear medicine studies usually localise the site of bleeding and that embolisation is a regular treatment, which are misleading statements.

Attempting a comprehensive account of trauma in a book of this size presents problems. Where the text is often concise, detailed, and fairly comprehensive it would have benefited by more and better use of illustrations. Where space is limited three pages showing normal films of the hand and wrist seems unnecessary, and simple line drawings could have replaced films of obvious fractures, allowing space for x ray plates of more difficult areas. The x ray plates are of only reasonable quality and more subtle abnormalities are sometimes "lost." The section on facial trauma is largely illustrated by computed tomographic scans. For the casualty officer or junior radiologist in training more annotations as well as more illustrations would be helpful.

There are good accounts of trauma to the cervical and thoracolumbar spine and to the shoulder and elbow. Surprisingly, there is no mention of how to cope with an equivocal case of scaphoid fracture nor of scaphoid views, and only the briefest mention of the displaced fat pad in injuries around the elbow joint. In the chapter on head trauma clearer guidance might have been given on the role of skull x rays in patients with minor head injuries, and the rather different situation in children is not discussed.

The book contains much good information on radiology in trauma. At the price, I do not think radiologists in training or casualty officers are likely to buy it, but it would be a useful addition to libraries in radiology and casualty departments.

J F REIDY

## Haematology lab text

*Medical Laboratory Haematology.* Roger Hall and Robert G Malia. (Pp 669; £37.50.) Butterworths. 1984.

On setting out to review this book, my first feeling was surprise that no one has produced a similar text before. The combination of descriptions of haematological disorders and the detailed practical methods for their diagnosis seems a winning one. As the authors point out in the preface, however, the physiology, pathophysiology, and practical aspects are the terms of reference, and not the clinical. It is a shame that a comprehensive haematology text that would truly be suitable for all "technologists, scientists, and medical colleagues," as the authors intend, was not developed. Thus senior house officers and registrars in haematology will need to buy a clinical text as well. The omission of clinical information presumably reflects the fact that both authors are non-medical senior chief medical laboratory scientific officers, but a medical colleague might have contributed clinical sections that would have strengthened the book.

It is attractively presented, with a good page layout, an adequate index, and the chapters well referenced up to 1982. Introductory chapters on haemopoiesis and physiology are followed by sections dealing with collecting blood samples, staining blood films, estimat-



ing erythrocyte sedimentation rate, automation, and quality control. These are suitably brief, to the point, and a satisfactory part of the book.

Anaemias are divided into four large chapters as follows: microcytic; macrocytic; haemolytic; refractory. Each chapter is subdivided into physiological and pathological aspects and a description of methods. In the division of these chapters I found the book less satisfactory. Each aspect is neatly laid out and generally accurate, but I found it difficult to extract information when preparing a lecture on haemolytic anaemia, principally because of a lack of cross references within and between chapters and artificial separations of similar subjects because of the format. For example, the methods relating to haemoglobin electrophoresis are 50 pages away from the descriptive section on sickle cell haemoglobin, with no page reference to link them. Worse, since the thalassaemias are dealt with under microcytic anaemias (page references do help in finding this) the measurement of haemoglobins A<sub>2</sub> and F is described separately from the other haemoglobin investigations. Such a division is not only inconvenient but interferes with achieving an overall understanding of these related and interacting conditions.

Sections on the leukaemias and other myeloproliferative disorders are better, being more self contained and so allowing a more logical relation in the text between description and methods. I take issue with the inclusion of erythraemic myelosis in a classification of these disorders, however, since this term is archaic and the conditions to which it relates have been absorbed in acute leukaemias and refractory anaemias.

Thrombosis and haemostasis are well covered, but a surprising omission is a section on blood transfusion. Some relevant techniques are included in the section on haemolytic anaemia, but such a book needs to provide a full account of the problems and practices of hospital blood banking.

This is the most modern manual of laboratory tests available, pending a revised edition of *Practical Haematology* by Dacie and Lewis. Haematology laboratories will want to have it available, but it is difficult to recommend to individuals because it is rather expensive for a laboratory manual and other books will be needed to cover clinical aspects and blood transfusion. A future edition will need substantial re-editing, rather than rewriting, to make it more "user friendly," and it must include blood banking.

IAN M FRANKLIN

## Measuring pregnancy and birth

*Perinatal Epidemiology*. Ed Michael B Bracken. (Pp 550; £40.) Oxford University Press. 1984.

In some ways the perinatal period is excellent territory for the epidemiologist. It is confined in time and has some firm measures of outcome, such as stillbirth and neonatal death, which can be detected promptly. Further consideration, however, shows the tangled sociobiological skein of the mother's background, which weights all the other aetiological features to a varying degree. In addition, with the perinatal mortality rate in the West at 10-15 per 1000 total births, all are seeking to use less firm data on morbidity to assess outcome—neurological, developmental, or behavioural measures.

Michael Bracken's *Perinatal Epidemiology* joins the rapidly growing number of review publications on the subject in the past quinquennium. He has collected a variety of experts to write chapters and, different from many books from west of the Atlantic, he recognises skills in Britain and the rest of Europe, although three quarters of his authors are American. The volume has therefore a strong American flavour but much of the published work reviewed naturally comes from Britain, where perinatal epidemiology has been esteemed more than in most countries.

The first section considers several specific perinatal disorders, not just the expected (such as perinatal mortality, congenital abnormalities, and infections) but infertility, unwanted pregnancy, and

trophoblastic disease. Fourteen chapters give excellent reviews of their chosen topics; all provide core material for anyone starting on this subject. Personal choice always introduces bias, but I particularly enjoyed Bakkateig and his colleagues writing on perinatal mortality from a wider point of view than many of us achieve. Eva Alberman provides a thoughtful chapter on low birth weight, clearly expressing the value of contour charts rather than cut off points. An excellent review of multiple births by Allen highlights the usefulness of twins in providing natural experiments for epidemiological studies.

The second section is on methodology. This might seem outside the needs of the working obstetrician or paediatrician, but many would benefit from Freedman's chapter on deciding sample size or Jane Gordon on the assessment of occupational exposure, where she outlines measurement of exposure to the hazard and assessment to the outcome. Bracken himself contributes a perceptive chapter on randomised controlled trials, which should delight the director of our National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit in its discussion of the use and justification of these essential methods of assessment.

This is an excellent collection of well presented information. It is expensive, but as reviewers we should perhaps stop carping about the price of books, assume that publishers know their market, and realise that overpriced volumes sell fewer copies. It should be read by all concerned with obstetrics and paediatrics as well as candidates for higher examinations in these subjects. It should be bought by medical libraries that serve these disciplines.

GEOFFREY CHAMBERLAIN

## Nuclear war

*Australia and Nuclear War*. [Based on a symposium organised by the Australian National University, June 1983.] Ed Michael Denborough. (Pp 270; £19.95 hardback, £8.95 paperback.) Croom Helm. 1983.

Nuclear war arouses very strong emotion, but, in the words of the vice chancellor of the Australian National University, this should not prevent universities from discussing it and subjecting its diverse components to dispassionate and objective critical analysis. By these means it may be possible to develop strategies for averting nuclear disaster.

Based on an international symposium in June 1983, this book holds together well despite there being 20 authors. The publishers have adopted a populist technique of including the author's picture on the title page of each chapter, so in addition to finding out what they have to say you can also see what they look like. The first part considers the nuclear arms race, the second the consequences of nuclear war, and the third prevention of nuclear war.

The opening chapter, written by Frank Barnaby, who has done more than anyone to warn us of the dangers of the nuclear arms race, examines the likelihood of nuclear war. The development and deployment of more accurate and more reliable nuclear weapons has led to the superpowers adopting war fighting strategies. The days of Mutually Assured Destruction have long passed us by. We are now in the even Madder world of pre-emptive strikes and with one side believing in winning a nuclear war.

A paper by two prominent defence strategists points out that Australia would be a prime target in a nuclear exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union because of the American bases on its soil. This point is not entirely lost on a British audience. We are host to roughly 150 American bases. American influence goes beyond the military into economics. It is not just the budget deficit and high interest rates in the United States that affect the economies of nations all over the world, it is the extraordinary growth in arms expenditure that influences other programmes including health, education, and foreign aid. To look at the food problems in large sections of the developing world and to contrast this with the arms spending bonanza of many other countries is to despair for the human condition.

The middle section of the book covers the same ground as the

BMA report *The Medical Effects of Nuclear War*<sup>1</sup> and spells out the details of the "final epidemic." The concept of nuclear winter was discussed at this symposium, one of the first occasions that this crucial new information was put before the public.

The final section is concerned with how public opinion may be mobilised so that nuclear war can be prevented and includes the activities of the Green Party in Germany and the world wide impact of Greenham Common. Nancy Shelley makes a compelling case for the view that the nuclear threat is due to the narrow, unimaginative, and arrogant thinking of male scientists and technocrats. Women now wish to emphasise the real priorities—of life not fear, of cooperation not competition, and of human needs not weapons construction.

The final chapter by Patrick White, the Nobel Prize winning author, urges us all to become concerned in the peace movement. It is not enough to issue verbal pleas for humanitarian values, however acceptable and comforting they may be. The time has come to sacrifice propriety for political effectiveness. Many examples are given of how non-violent resistance can achieve positive results and inspires us to rouse ourselves to do all in our power to prevent the ultimate catastrophe.

S C FARROW

<sup>1</sup> BMA Board of Science and Education. *The medical effects of nuclear war*. Chichester: John Wiley, 1983.

## Elderly and digestive disease

*Medicine in Old Age*. "Gastrointestinal Tract Disorders in the Elderly." Ed J Hellemans and G Vantrappen. (Pp 271; £20.) Churchill Livingstone. 1984.

Aging, writes one of the contributors to this book, is a "dynamic process involving the slow attrition of biological reserve." Those with this failing reserve now constitute much of the workload, not just of geriatricians, but of all physicians and surgeons in Western societies and present a special challenge in careful assessment and sensitive management. A series of multiauthor works on "Medicine in Old Age," must therefore be welcomed. Though directed primarily at geriatricians, these books should update and inform other specialists on aspects of aging that bear on their own specialties.

The Belgian editors, a geriatrician and a gastroenterologist, have picked their expert contributors from several countries and disciplines. The result is a clearly presented and thoroughly indexed work; the standard of English is excellent throughout. The opening chapter summarises well the symptoms of digestive disorders as applied especially to the aged, though later chapters retread much of the same ground. But should pregnancy be mentioned as a cause of constipation in this context?

The editors' chapter on oesophageal problems veers towards being a monograph, excellent in its way, on oesophageal motility disorders, but with too many manometric tracings, some sub-standard radiographs, and not much more than lip service paid to the special problems of the elderly. Unfortunately, the practicalities of management of benign peptic stricture, all too common in the very old, get but a sentence. By contrast, the next chapter, on gastric changes with age, is disappointingly sketchy, and contains the surprising statement, for a disease where the mean age at presentation is over 60, that "gastric ulcer does not show a specific age linked frequency." An otherwise comprehensive contribution on peptic ulcer disease, which follows, might perhaps have sounded a note of caution regarding cimetidine dosage in the elderly.

A chapter on small bowel structure and function in relation to aging, though inclined to focus on minutiae, serves as a useful prelude to an excellent and practical review of malabsorption syndromes in the elderly, with differential diagnosis and management succinctly covered. After further contributions dealing with ischaemic disease of the intestine, and vascular malformations, a chapter on motor function summarises our understanding of colonic

motility and its pathophysiology in constipation and diarrhoea. And so to faecal incontinence, a brief but masterly review by Brocklehurst which should make refreshing reading for gastroenterologist and geriatrician alike. Diverticular disease is mainly surprising if it is not present in older patients, and its presence should not be used as a scapegoat for all lower abdominal problems in the elderly. The chapter by Smith and Eastwood puts the disorder and its treatment with a high fibre diet into perspective; but should they really be advocating the use of anxiolytic agents "to reduce tension" in this or any age group?

After colonic tumours, liver disease, and pancreatic disorders, there is a particularly neat account of the acute abdomen in the elderly. Finally, a beautifully illustrated chapter discusses endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography and its therapeutic applications, the latter so valuable in old people at high risk if subjected to major surgery.

There are few omissions in this comprehensively referenced volume. Perhaps more might have been made of iatrogenic disease, for drugs get scant and patchy mention as causes of gastrointestinal morbidity, though they are dealt with well in the chapter on liver disease. Disappointingly, the inflammatory bowel diseases get only token coverage, given that the second, though smaller, peak age of onset is in the late middle aged and elderly. This book should be near at hand for every geriatrician, who will find it practical and instructive without being weighty, while the general physician or surgeon with a digestive bent should glean from it much that will enhance his own care of the elderly.

STEPHEN P KANE

## Heavy dress rehearsal

*Textbook of Gastroenterology*. Ian A D Bouchier, Robert N Allan, Humphrey J F Hodgson, and Michael R B Keighley. (Pp 1560; £55.) Baillière Tindall. 1984.

No fewer than 202 contributors have written for this monumental textbook, which has an index of 56 pages and weighs just under 4 kg. Arranged in a systematic fashion from mouth to colon, it includes sections on the pancreas, gall bladder, and biliary system. Hepatic disease is not considered.

The format is attractive and easy to read. Most contributions are brief and succinct and followed by lists of key references. Pleasingly, appropriate space is given to nutritional assessment, stomas and their care, and the functional gut; the final chapter on normal values is also an interesting source of reference.

My major criticism concerns the large number of contributors, which has resulted in frequent duplication of material. For example, it seems unnecessary for 12 individuals to describe the anal canal and perineum. This has led to irksome repetition of sundry topics like thrombosed piles, fibrous anal polyps, fissures, and the inclusion of two separate photographs of perianal Crohn's disease. This subject would have been better dealt with in its entirety by one experienced colorectal surgeon.

Again, the chapters on the functional bowel and on the large intestine come perilously close to overlapping, particularly regarding laxative abuse and the irritable bowel syndrome. Another chapter on gastroenteritis in paediatric practice sketchily surveys material already considered in greater depth in sections written by Tomkins, Banatvala, and others, while the final part on treatment is too brief to be of any real practical use. This section should never have been included; its subject matter properly remains a province of paediatric gastroenterology, on which many other appropriate texts have been written.

The book is lavishly illustrated, and, in general, the many line drawings, diagrams, and photographs are of high standard. Some photographs, however, are of poor quality and either uninformative or uninterpretable. Examples are blue rubber naevus and pseudo-xanthoma elasticum. Without previous knowledge, it would be impossible to learn from black and white photographs how to distinguish Peutz-Jeghers pigmentation from the telangiectatic



spots of hereditary haemorrhagic telangiectasia, and it seems an expensive exercise to publish three separate pictures of the latter condition. I could not understand why the second contributor was allowed to include shots with the patient's mouth open and closed. What purpose is served by such excess?

Another photograph of caecal "angiodyplasia" is reproduced twice, admittedly at different magnifications and with different legends. Some of the coloured lesions (plate 7) have been photographed from too great a distance to show any meaningful detail to the uninformed reader. The histological section of normal intestinal mucosa gave me a suspicious feeling of murine (or was it rat?) *déjà vu*; the dissecting microscope image of coeliac disease mucosa provided no details of surface contour whatsoever, while the accompanying histological picture was notable for its preparative artefact.

Overall, this book will probably satisfy both the expert and the learner. Most sections present balanced, in depth discussions without being unduly didactic or simplistic. I found it appealing, despite its many defects. Now that the dress rehearsal is over, this production needs a stiff dose of editorial purging if it is to match its American rivals.

It is surprisingly underpriced at £55, and well within the individual pocket. Nevertheless, it would be reassuring to know that a greatly strengthened and rationalised second edition was likely to appear in the near future. Then we might have produced a winner.

MICHAEL N MARSH

## The elderly bladder

*Medicine in Old Age.* "Urology in the Elderly." Ed J C Brocklehurst. (Pp 245; £20.) Churchill Livingstone. 1984.

Though undramatic, bladder disorders in the elderly cause embarrassment and distress to patients, exhaust and annoy relatives and carers, and often result in removal to expensive and oppressive institutions. Thus the topic is particularly relevant to the needs of physicians, surgeons, nurses, psychologists, and social workers.

The main emphasis in *Urology in the Elderly* is on urinary incontinence, and the first chapter describes the effects of aging on the structure and function of the bladder and the effects that diseases that are common in old age have on function. This is followed by a particularly good account of the advances in the techniques for investigating bladder function that have been made over the past few years. A brief account of the "best buy" of tests for routine practice would be useful here. A reasonable account of drugs used in treating bladder dysfunction rightly emphasises the limited role these usually have in controlling incontinence. A chapter on surgical techniques for incontinence in women is well written and gives the general reader a brief review of what the gynaecologist has to offer. Disappointingly, although there is an excellent account of structural and histological changes in the aging prostate, details of the investigation and the medical and surgical management are conspicuously absent.

Investigation, drug treatment, and surgery are of little avail for incontinence if they are not backed up by dynamic and imaginative nursing care, which is dealt with in a particularly impressive chapter. Few of the behavioural techniques for controlling incontinence that are discussed in another chapter had been tried or validated in the elderly, which is disappointing. And as a simple clinician I was sceptical about the theoretical framework used to describe the social and psychological consequences of incontinence. For example, I doubt the effects of "ego integrity *v* despair" in the control of urination in patients over 60.

There is a useful review of urinary tract infections and their aetiology and the distinction between upper and lower tract infections, their clinical relevance, and their treatment. The practical problems of collecting samples and a more didactic approach to the choice and dosage of antibiotics would have been helpful here. Bladder cancer, tuberculosis, and calculi are dealt with and the

concluding chapter gives an up to date account of the investigation and management of carcinoma of the prostate.

Despite the fact that the authors represent a wide range of disciplines and come from Britain, the United States, and Greece, skilful editing has produced a coherent, interesting, and lucid work that is remarkably free from jargon. Both a practical clinical guide and a stimulus to further research, it will be of immense value to geriatricians and to urologists and gynaecologists who are interested in the care of the elderly. Nurses also will find much to interest and help them in the key role that they take in the managing bladder problems in elderly people.

WILLIAM J MACLENNAN

## In brief . . .

From his active 80 years and in a revealing autobiographical account of *Discovery and Healing in Peace and War* (1/27 Tintern Avenue, Toorak 3142, Australia; price not stated) Sir Ian Wood interleaves ancestral, social, and clinical research observations dating from 1854 to the present. His life, full of interest and achievement, might be said to have grown around the theme stated by Montaigne—"The great and glorious enterprise of man is to know how to live to purpose . . ." The second world war necessarily dominates the views of his middle years, which are seen first from the Middle East then the Pacific zone. His role as a medical participant and general observer on the battlefields of man against man was then exchanged for an equally vigorous but more constructive battle against disease. Forming the first major clinical research unit in Australia, he invented gastric biopsy and led classical studies on chronic diseases of the stomach. He helped Sir Macfarlane Burnet to direct the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, and, after his own "retirement" in 1963, he followed and has now reviewed the subsequent 10 years of its research. The echo from this slim volume completes the sentence of Montaigne—" . . . all other things, to reign, to lay up treasure, to build are, at most, but appendices and props."

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