

RES MEDICA

Journal of the Royal Medical Society



Book Reviews

Abstract

INTRA-ABDOMINAL CRISES by K. D. Keele, M.D., F.R.C.P., and N. M. Matheson, F.R.C.S., M.R.C.P., F.A.C.S. Pp. 397. Published by Butterworths. Price 50s. plus 2s. by post.

It has become increasingly obvious that the ancient distinction between physician and barber surgeon is an unreal one; and nowhere is this more obvious than in the field of abdominal disorders. Edinburgh has recognised the need for close collaboration between physicians and surgeons in the shape of the gastrointestinal unit at the Western General Hospital.

DILLING'S CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY. revised by Stanley Alstead. C.B.E., M.D., F.R.F.P.S., F.R.C.P. Lond., F.R.C.P.Edin., F.R.S.Edin. and others. 20th Edition, Pp. 860. Published by Cassel & Company Ltd. Price 30s. net.

This textbook is notable for the wide limits of the topics discussed under the heading of pharmacology. The authors have succeeded in gathering together under each chapter heading the physiological principles involved in the working of each system and have attempted to relate the pharmacology of the drugs under discussion to them. They go on to carefully and logically show the rationale of the use of the drugs in medicine. At the same time, wherever possible, they demonstrate that the same pharmacological actions are also responsible for the toxic actions and side effects. In this way it is possible to assess the benefit of a drug to the patient against a background of knowledge which also allows the risks involved to be estimated.

Copyright Royal Medical Society. All rights reserved. The copyright is retained by the author and the Royal Medical Society, except where explicitly otherwise stated. Scans have been produced by the Digital Imaging Unit at Edinburgh University Library. Res Medica is supported by the University of Edinburgh's Journal Hosting Service: <http://journals.ed.ac.uk>

ISSN: 2051-7580 (Online) ISSN: 0482-3206 (Print)

Res Medica is published by the Royal Medical Society, 5/5 Bristo Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9AL

Res Medica, May 1961, 2(4): 56-58

doi: [10.2218/resmedica.v2i4.367](https://doi.org/10.2218/resmedica.v2i4.367)

BOOK REVIEWS

INTRA-ABDOMINAL CRISES by K. D. Keele, M.D., F.R.C.P., and N. M. Matheson, F.R.C.S., M.R.C.P., F.A.C.S. Pp. 397. Published by Butterworths. Price 50s. plus 2s. by post.

It has become increasingly obvious that the ancient distinction between physician and barber surgeon is an unreal one; and nowhere is this more obvious than in the field of abdominal disorders. Edinburgh has recognised the need for close collaboration between physicians and surgeons in the shape of the gastro-intestinal unit at the Western General Hospital.

However, in most hospitals there remains the difficulty of deciding whether a patient with abdominal symptoms should be moved to a medical or surgical ward for further care. This decision often rests with the house physician or house surgeon, and can be a very important one. It is in these situations that the information in this book will prove most valuable, as it is written by a consultant physician and consultant surgeon at the Ashford Hospital in Middlesex.

The book does not set out to be a comprehensive textbook of gastro-enterology. It describes not only the common and uncommon gastro-intestinal emergencies, but also the gynaecological and urological disorders as well as some of the extra-abdominal disorders which can produce abdominal symptoms. It is mainly concerned with diagnosis, although it does give some hints as to management.

It would not be very useful as a reference book in an emergency but more as a source of background knowledge. It is a very interesting book to read, and it is well produced in a lurid orange binding with a number of useful photographs, X-rays and diagrams.

Undergraduates would learn a great deal from this book which would be of value in practical medicine. It seems expensive, but it would be an excellent book to borrow.

J.A.R.F.

DILLING'S CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, revised by Stanley Alstead, C.B.E., M.D., F.R.F.P.S., F.R.C.P. Lond., F.R.C.P.Edin., F.R.S.Edin. and others. 20th Edition, Pp. 860. Published by Cassel & Company Ltd. Price 30s. net.

This textbook is notable for the wide limits of the topics discussed under the heading of pharmacology. The authors have succeeded in gathering together under each chapter heading the physiological principles involved in the working of each system and have attempted to relate the pharmacology of the drugs under discussion to them. They go on to carefully and logically show the rationale of the use of the drugs in medicine. At the same time, wherever possible, they demonstrate that the same pharmacological actions are also responsible for the toxic actions and side-effects. In this way it is possible to assess the benefit of a drug to the patient against a background of knowledge which also allows the risks involved to be estimated.

The topics under consideration are illustrated by reference to a limited number of representative preparations at present in common use. In each case the drug is discussed under several headings. The sources of the drug are mentioned and reference is made to chemical composition; the pharmacological actions are then considered with emphasis on those which have therapeutic applications; the side-effects and toxic actions are correlated, where possible, to the pharmacological actions and finally the therapeutic uses of the drug are considered and attention is drawn to the most appropriate preparations and methods of administration. This basic layout is followed by a brief discussion of similar drugs and their advantages.

The main advantage of this textbook is the way in which physiology, medicine and pharmacology have been interrelated. Although this may be a disadvantage to those trying to cram for an examination, it is surely the most logical presentation.

The main fault in this book is its thoroughness. The authors have been reluctant to leave anything out and at the same time have allowed themselves to prevaricate upon relatively subtle details. In other places one must read through a whole paragraph before finding that the drug is now obsolete. In some chapters, in their attempt to integrate pharmacology, the authors have failed to restrict themselves to the salient features and allowed too much space to long-winded generalisations.

The appendix runs to 187 pages, about 20% of the total material in the book, and contains a formulary, a course of practical instruction for Glasgow students and a section on pharmaceutical chemistry, all of which make the book far too large.

The production of the book can only be criticised on the use of two different sizes of type used in the text. It was difficult to decide whether the paragraphs in smaller print were considered less important or more difficult to understand. Perhaps the publishers were also unsure since only careful examination allows one to detect the difference in print size.

In conclusion, I think this book, due to the inclusion of excessive material, is of more use for selective revision than for an initial understanding, for which it was designed.

J.S.K.

MEDICAL EVIDENCE IN PERSONAL INJURY CASES, by Dorothy Knight Dix, Q.C., and Alan H. Todd, M.S., F.R.C.S. Pp. xii & 244, 17 illustrations. Published by H. K. Lewis & Co. Ltd. Price 42s. net.

This compact book is authoritatively written by two authors both widely experienced in their own fields. All aspects of personal injury are covered briefly but quite adequately. Sound advice is given on legal aspects of medical examination, the presentation of medical evidence and the writing of medical reports. The nature and degree of the injuries sustained are dealt with in a systematic fashion chapter by chapter e.g. knee joint, shoulder, spine, c.n.s., etc. The book ends with possibly its most useful chapter dealing with the do's and don't's for a medical practitioner giving evidence in the witness box.

This book, although as Lord Birkett says in the forward "fills a long felt need", is not one that the medical student will probably find time to read, but it is almost definitely a must for the library of a qualified medical practitioner.

W.H.L.

TOXICITY OF INDUSTRIAL METALS, by Ethel Browning, M.D. 1st Edition 1960, 325 pages. Published by Butterworths. Price 50s., plus 1/9 postage.

This book is intended for "those concerned with the industrial use of metals" and biochemists. Forty-four metals are dealt with in reasonable, but not excessive detail. After the text on each metal a very full reference list is added so that this book may be used as a starting point for fuller research.

Dr. Browning's aims are most modest since this book will also most certainly appeal to the interested undergraduate with time at his disposal. He will learn much about those metals in a very short space of time owing to the lucid and informative style of the book.

Unfortunately Phosphorus, because it is not defined as a metal, and calcium, sodium and potassium which despite their great physiological importance are of little consequence from the industrial point of view, are not included. There are no illustrations.

R.A.B.

CORRECTION OF SUBNORMAL VISION. Norman Bier, F.B.O.A. (Hons.), F.A.A.O., D.Orth. vi 231 pp., 133 illus. Butterworth & Co. Ltd., 1960. 50s.

It is all too easy for a practitioner or student to take the services of the ancillary professions for granted. Too often a patient is sent to the appropriate department with vague references to treatment which could cover the whole of the speciality.

The book under review affords one way of understanding the principles of the work undertaken by a vital branch of the ophthalmological profession. The author has considerable experience on both sides of the Atlantic, and intends that it should be used primarily by students working for Diplomas in Ophthalmic Optics and Orthoptics, and it is essentially a practical book with no more theory than is absolutely essential.

The work can be regarded as divided into three sections. The first two chapters form an introduction, dealing with visual subnormality in general, and in children in particular. After descriptive chapters on the types of aids available, almost half the book is devoted to clinical procedures of testing and fitting. Throughout the book, one is impressed by the use of lucid explanatory photographs.

A fairly extensive bibliography completes a volume which will reward anyone who wishes to read outside the standard fifth year ophthalmology course.

P.J.S.

DEMONSTRATIONS OF PHYSICAL SIGNS IN CLINICAL SURGERY, by Hamilton Bailey. 13th Ed. Bristol: John Wright and Sons, Ltd., 1960. Pp. 928+xvi; 1142 illustrations. Price, 75s.

Bacon wrote that some books are to be tasted, others to be chewed, and a few to be thoroughly digested. It is a pleasure to review a book which can be briefly consulted and systematically read, with both pleasure and profit.

The latest edition of "Physical Signs" provides an even more comprehensive collection of clinical facts than its eminent predecessors. The book begins with a review of some basic clinical states and a survey of "lumps and bumps". After discussing the signs of local inflammatory lesions and giving a clear and concise account of the examination of bones and joints, the author systematically relates the clinical features of affections of the various systems and parts. The whole has been expanded in order that it may be of more use to post-graduate students and in order to keep up with recent advances.

The value of this book cannot be questioned. It is now in its 175th thousand, and German, Turkish, Spanish, Bulgarian and Yugoslav editions have been published. It provides a wealth of clinical information which should help students of medicine at all levels, both undergraduate and post-graduate. Some of the signs may have been rather outmoded by technical advances, but they serve as a reminder of the value of clinical examination. And great benefit and pleasure may be derived from eliciting a physical sign and making a diagnosis, thereby anticipating the results obtained from the ubiquitous test tube and its biochemical mentor. Perhaps some, in particular the undergraduates, may be irritated by the constant use of eponyms at a time when they are becoming less fashionable but most will be soothed by their interest in reading the many footnotes concerning the distinguished men of medicine and surgery of the past and present.

The book is beautifully and lavishly illustrated. Many of the diagrams show Mr. Bailey's unique gift of providing a simple, pictorial aid to the over-burdened undergraduate memory. There is an excellent index. It is unfortunate that the price has been increased to 75s. It is certainly well worth the money.

The recent death of Mr. Hamilton Bailey has meant the loss of one of the great teachers of surgery. This book will ensure that the influence of this

great teacher will continue for a long time.

G.W.K.D.

THE CATARRHAL CHILD. By John Fry, M.D.(London), F.R.C.S.(Eng.). 1st Edition Pp. 139, 32 tables, 14 figures. Published by Butterworths, London, 1961. Price 25s.

This is a little book dealing with one of the common problems in general practice, the catarrhal child syndrome. The author, a G.P. in Beckenham, Kent, has taken the trouble, over the past ten years, to study and follow up 750 such children and he now presents his findings in the form of this book. It is refreshing to read a medical book aimed at doctors from consultant to G.P., at nurses and even at lay men and women i.e. the parents concerned, without even a mention of the student. Thus it is possible to examine the pearls without too much of a swinish glance.

The book takes the form of ten short chapters each admirably set out in sub-chapters with headings in bold type, so that even the most casual reader can remember the subject of his perusal. Each chapter also has a summary containing the main points of its theme clearly set out and enumerated. I found the most delightful aspect of the book was the use of plain and direct English. Short paragraphs state their content clearly and with exuberant rhetoric, so that the reader finds himself drawn into the argument and stimulated to think for himself.

The subject is treated from the social medicine point of view rather than as a purely clinical condition, bearing out the old maxim "Treat the patient and not the disease". The author covers the field completely, choosing one of the main features of the syndrome as the subject of each of his chapters, ranging from "The Problems" to the more prosaic "Tonsils and Adenoids". He supports his arguments well with statistics compiled from his own experience, presented in the form of the many figures and tables. He is also not afraid to include the opposing points of view, which are clearly stated, complete with references.

I can thoroughly recommend this book for its well-balanced outlook on this syndrome, especially the chapters concerned with "Antibiotics" and "Tonsils and Adenoids".

The book is well printed and strongly bound, but it comes complete with a dust jacket faced with a substance which displays a remarkable affinity for finger prints.

R.W.