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## Book Review

### Abstract

THE CHILD AND HIS SYMPTOMS— A PSYCHOSOMATIC APPROACH by John Apley and Ronald MacKeith.  
published by Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford, at 25s.

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action is before the effector site. Transmission has been shown to be depressed at the ganglion but not sufficiently to account for the hypotensive effect. Similarly post ganglionic stimulation did not cause contraction of the smooth muscle effector organ. In certain preparations guanethidine has been shown to enhance the action of acetyl choline. Now on Burn's theory of adrenergic mechanisms the post synaptic nerve is cholinergic and causes the release of noradrenaline from peripheral stores. Thus the story of an action similar to acetyl choline or facilitation of acetyl choline would fit in well with this theory. On the other hand there is no direct proof that the implementation of acetyl choline action has any connection with the hypotensive action. Another possibility is that guanethidine has some action on the storage of catechol amines in the nerve ending. There is no proof that the mode of action is depression of conduction or interference in the synthesis of catechol amines.

Another hypotensive drug, Alpha methyl dopa, has been recently introduced. It has been shown to decrease the excretion products of tyrosine and tryptophane metabolism. It also reduces the stores of catechol amines in the heart and brain. It is thought that it acts as a competitive inhibitor of dopa decarboxylase and, hence, antagonises the formation of adrenaline and noradrenaline. However, after catechol amine depletion following alpha methyl dopa treatment the dopa decarboxylase activity has been shown to recover before the effects of the drug on blood pressure have worn off. Thus one has to postulate either a very slow turnover rate in the formation of the catechol amines, which seems most unlikely, or that competitive inhibition is only part of the story. Perhaps, as with reserpine, there is some interference with the storage mechanism.

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## BOOK REVIEW

**THE CHILD AND HIS SYMPTOMS—A PSYCHOSOMATIC APPROACH**—by John Apley and Ronald MacKeith, published by Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford, at 25s.

"In illness the whole person is involved and, in trying to understand why he is ill at the time and in the way he is ill, it is logical to look at the whole person, body and mind. This is the comprehensive, psychosomatic approach."

Thus opens the preface of this book and thus it is well titled "The Child AND His Symptoms".

The reader must not be put off by regarding this book as only another esoteric account of the ins and outs of child psychiatry. On the contrary, Drs. Apley and MacKeith go to considerable length to put their "psychosomatic approach" into perspective with the simpler and more obvious diagnoses of organic disease.

As is implied by the title this book is mainly concerned with the common symptoms with which a child may present in the doctor's consulting room. Fourteen out of the twenty-three chapters are devoted to the discussion of one such symptom or group of symptoms, topics covered range from respiratory symptoms and recurrent

pain to tics and feeding disorders. The two opening chapters are introductory and briefly explain what the authors mean by the term psychosomatic medicine. There are two excellent chapters on handicaps of various types and their effects on parent, sibling and child. The last four chapters are devoted to the discussion of the old subject of the doctor - patient relationship. There is nothing startlingly new in these chapters but there are several useful practical tips to be garnered.

The book is concisely written and is eminently readable to anyone remotely interested in paediatric medicine. The stress is naturally put upon the psychosomatic causes of symptoms but the authors back up their claims with brief, well chosen histories and some most interesting statistics. There are few illustrations, of any form, since these are hardly necessary. The book is well produced in a clear and simple fashion and includes a very adequate index and list of references.

Its price possibly places it outside the financial reach of the average student. However the time taken to read it would be well spent by anyone contemplating a career in general practice and certainly by the budding paediatrician.

N.A.B.