

RES MEDICA

Journal of the Royal Medical Society



Books

Various Authors

Abstract

- Principles and Practice of Medical Computing: £3. Churchill Livingstone. L. G. Whitby and W. Lutz.
- Textbook of Medical Treatment, 12th Edition, £4.25. Longman Group Ltd., 1971. Edited Alstead, MacGregor and Girdwood.
- An Introduction to Clinical Research. £1.50 Churchill Livingstone. W. P. Small and Urban Krause.
- The Significance of Physical Signs in Medicine (1st Edition). £2.25. H. K. Lewis and Co., Ltd., Peter Mills.
- Jamieson's Illustrations of Regional Anatomy, Section V II, Lower Limb: Livingstone: £1. Revised by Robert Warmsley and T. R. Murphy, 9th Edition.
- Statistics in Small Doses. £2. A Livingstone Medical Text. Churchill Livingstone. W. M. Castle.

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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, Autumn 1972, 7(1): 38-40

doi:[10.2218/resmedica.v7i1.901](https://doi.org/10.2218/resmedica.v7i1.901)

BOOKS

Principles and Practice of Medical Computing: £3.
Churchill Livingstone, L. G. Whitby and W. Lutz.

For anyone with doubts as to the applicability of computer science to medicine, this book gives a comprehensive view of its present uses and the hopes for the future. Following a basic introduction to computer theory with a lengthy glossary of terms, each chapter in the book describes the use of computers in a specific field of medicine: research, clinical work, administration and teaching. The twenty-two authors involved have been chosen to provide specialised information and have a wealth of personal experience in the different areas. In this way the problems besetting the use of computers in medicine generally and any one speciality in particular can be dealt with authoritatively.

Because or perhaps in spite of the fact that the majority of the contributors are Edinburgh-based, like the major authors, the book as a whole is well-co-ordinated and theory section may seem rather daunting but this is a fault of all computer language and not of the present volume.

The division of the book into five sections with titles ranging from "Specific application of digital computers affecting groups and populations" to "Some examples of the use of computers in research and medical education" emphasises the underlying theme of practical application of computers which makes the book relevant to all medical personnel from general practitioners to hospital administrators. It is pleasant to find a general introductory text of this kind with extensive references allowing the interested reader to follow through any specific topic with ease. At £3.00 the book may be a

rather expensive extra for undergraduates but can be recommended to anyone entering modern medical research, general practice or administration.

U. M. Mac F.

Textbook of Medical Treatment, 12th Edition, £4.25.
Longman Group Ltd., 1971. Edited Alstead, MacGregor and Girdwood.

To review as old a favourite as "T.B. of Medical Treatment" is a difficult task. Everything worth saying has been said by wiser reviewers in the thirty-two years since it was first published.

The first striking change is on the spine. The name Dunlop is missing for the first time — it has been replaced by Girdwood. The shape and layout have changed too. The use of various type-faces to indicate sections and subsections is eye-catching and together with the comprehensive index makes the text a pleasure to use for quick reference, while the clear style of most of the authors is likely to detain one browsing.

The thirty-two contributors, with the exception of Her Majesty's Senior Medical Inspector of Factories, all work or have worked until recently in Scottish Medical Schools, seventeen of them in Edinburgh. The thirty chapters, ranging from "Psychiatry in General Practice" to "Disturbances in Water and Electrolyte Balance and in Acid Base Equilibrium", from "Common Disorders of Infancy and Childhood" to "The Care of Old People", have been revised or rewritten. They discuss treatment in its widest sense emphasising both the practical details and the dangers.

Thus, it is a useful book for the clinical student, the houseman and the G.P. to keep at

hand. However, in a text devoting two pages to the treatment of barbiturate overdose, in an age of drug abuse, it seems incongruous that the section on hypnotics should recommend barbiturates, merely listing nitrazepam along with glutethamide and methaqualone as other hypnotics not proven superior to barbiturates. M.H.

An Introduction to Clinical Research. £1.50
Churchill Livingstone. W. P. Small and Urban
Krause.

A book attempting to introduce controlled scientific method to clinical research fulfils a much needed purpose. However, if the "basic scientists" should glance through this volume their worst suspicions regarding the intellectual capacity of their clinical counterparts may be strengthened. The inclusion of a prominent and detailed diagram of several box files (closed) and a filing cabinet (open) and such subtitles as "This is fact -- is the patient alive or not?" may encourage cynicism, although the emphasis placed upon follow-up clinics as primarily for collection of research data and only secondarily for the after-care of patients would seem to be in the best "scientific" traditions.

Despite the over-simplification in parts, there is much useful information in this text and such chapters as "The Presentation of Results" with its dire warnings of the effects on an audience of overlong lectures, emphasis on rehearsal for the spoken presentation of results and advice on how to write an article for publication are a rare and valuable find. In its 121 pages the book is claimed to do no more than to serve as an introduction to this topical field and much space is devoted to very practical

problems such as the essential equipment required for follow-up surveys, the tracing of lost patients and the interpretation of results. Examples are taken mainly from post-gastrectomy follow-up in Scandinavia and in Britain, reflecting the interests and places of work of the joint authors. No doubt interested researchers in other clinical fields could extrapolate to their own situations.

New recruits to clinical research will find here, in an easily readable form, details of how to avoid many of the pitfalls encountered by their predecessors. Veterans in this field should find the book useful but might feel that the theories expounded apply to a rather ideal situation and not to the uncertainty of reality. However, the authors must be congratulated on making this preliminary attempt to raise the scientific status of the much-maligned clinical research.

Y. F. L. T.

The Significance of Physical Signs in Medicine (1st Edition). £2.25. H. K. Lewis and Co., Ltd., Peter Mills.

This is a book that every medical student should read during his clinical training and will probably want to read more than once. The material is set out in a precise and compact way and deals with the conditions commonly seen in medical practice. It is short, being a mere 93 pages crammed with valuable information, and yet it is also easily readable in a few hours. This combination of qualities should appeal to the majority of medical students, especially just prior to examinations.

Being short there are many omissions and the author has not yet included diseases which do not produce physical signs. Investigations

are not discussed but are occasionally mentioned in relevant places.

It is unfortunate that this book is priced so highly for its size, a feature which will deter many students from purchasing their own copy. Nevertheless, an extremely informative little book.

J. R. A.

Jameson's Illustrations of Regional Anatomy, Section VII, Lower Limb: Livingstone: £1. Revised by Robert Warmlesley and T. R. Murphy, 9th Edition.

In effect the new edition of these famous illustrations represents an attempt to bring them into line with the reduced amount of detailed anatomy required to be learned by the medical student of the seventies.

The content remains essentially unchanged. All the plates of the previous edition have been included except one, that of the Relations of the Transverse Tarsal Joint, an omission that will not be missed by many students! Two useful new plates have been added, a radiograph of the foot and one illustrating the dermatomes of the lower limb. Unfortunately, the illustrations themselves have been printed on a poorer quality of paper than that of previous editions and they lack the same definition, clarity and pleasing colours of their predecessors.

There has been a reduction in the amount of legend, which has the advantage of highlighting the more important structures, but the revisers have fallen into the prevalent medical trap of excessive abbreviation. Thus, to take a florid example, the Infrapatellar branch of the Saphenous Nerve is slaughtered to Infrapat. br. saphen.n: this presentation of legend is irritat-

ing and constitutes the main criticism of the new edition.

While undoubtedly these plates will continue to be widely pondered over by medical students it is a pity to note changes in its revision that cannot be said to be improvements.

J.S.H.R.

Statistics in Small Doses. £2. A Livingstone Medical Text. Churchill Livingstone. W. M. Castle.

This book attempts with little success to combine programmed learning with an informal approach. Like all programmed learning texts the question and answer ritual is frequently repetitive and frustrating. Answers are printed in the right hand column and a card is provided to cover the correct answer while the reader attempts the questions.

The basic concept of building up the details of the subject gradually, commencing with a description of numbers and measurement, is laudable but explanations of the theory behind the formulae used are seldom given. As described in the introduction, this allows the author to keep the length of the text to a minimum but brevity seems to have been achieved at the expense of clarity. Brief summaries at the end of each chapter are helpful but might usefully have been extended.

The worked examples and numerous tests of progress are useful and are medically-oriented. Formulae are repeated several times and the notation is clear. On the whole this book provides a good guide to some practical uses of statistics in medicine but would require to be supplemented with theoretical background for any basic understanding of the elements of the subject.

N. de P.