

REVIEWS

FAMILY PLANNING

Edited by Mary Pollock. Publishers: Bailliere, Tindall and Cassell

In an era agog with mounting interests on the problems of family planning, it is natural to find amongst the shelves of a medical library a voluminous pile-up of books, journals and allied literature devoted to these problems.

To a General Practitioner and a Family Doctor who perhaps would like to have some knowledge of "everything" there is in family planning, a book listing the basic facts of conception and contraception, and not crowded with too much detail on researches and recent clinical advances, would be a welcome manual to have in his office for handy reference, and in his home for easy and pleasurable reading. Such a book is attempted to be produced by Mary Pollock, a Gynaecologist of the North Kensington Marriage Welfare Centre in London. Like she says "To give advice in Family Planning really well a doctor must be something of a gynaecologist, endocrinologist and psychiatrist".

The medical curriculum of most British Schools of Undergraduate Medicine does not include a comprehensive training in Family Planning except perhaps in only recent times, and no General Practitioner can perhaps carry on facing his or her patients day to day without having to be confronted at one time or another on Family Planning problems. This present book is simply written, precise and clear. Many details may be lacking in all sections but those

are what the General Practitioners can do without and if more detailed information is required, one has the most comprehensive and up to date bibliographies at the end of every chapter of the text to refer. A total of 16 authors contribute to this edition including Mary Pollock. They are all English authors and though not all may be known internationally, at least, they are accepted experienced "hands" in their respective contributions and Londoners know them well. The contributions range from the various methods of family planning to the gynaecological and psychological problems of Infertility. Spice is added by a chapter on a Clinic Organisation and its Routine. The History of the Family Planning movement culminating in the gigantic present day International Planned Parenthood Federation which incidentally has its headquarters in London, backs up the rear of the book.

Lord Brain writes a foreword to the book, describing it as "authoritative and up-to-date" and Professor Norman Morris of Charing Cross Hospital Medical School introduces it to the Public, in place of the late Professor William Nixon, who suddenly died before this book arrived for print.

Priced at thirty shillings (approximately thirteen dollars)—it should be well worth it.

T. H. Lean

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ETHICS IN MEDICAL PROGRESS

Ciba Foundation Symposium

Ed. G. E. W. Wolstenholme, Maeve O'Connor, J. A. Churchill, London W.C.1. 42 s.

This is a symposium on a very important subject, in which were asked questions such as: in what circumstances a volunteer donor could be considered free from undue influence? for how long should "life" be maintained in a person with irrevocable damage of the brain? does a parent always have the right to accept or refuse treatment of his child? what special

protection must be given to minors, people of low intelligence, or prisoners, in regard to clinical trials or donation of tissues? when does death occur in an unconscious patient dependent on artificial aids to circulation and respiration? are there ever circumstances when death may be mercifully advanced? when may a pregnancy be ended? how far is it justified to destroy an

animal in order to prolong human life? does the law permit operations which "mutilate" the donor for the advantage of another person? what protection do medical men require from society in the extension of new life-saving techniques? to what extent must a community underwrite the cost, however great, of the latest means of sustaining life?

Clearly at this stage of our social development with the old morality under scrutiny and new ethics still to be evolved, it is unlikely a definite answer can be found for all these questions. Further, the selection of the participants would appear to be restricted, with a few exceptions, to specialists who are themselves involved as interested parties. This choice must make the views expressed more susceptible to loss of detachment, and impartiality. It is regrettable

that views of patients and donors and general practitioners were not represented—the former being at the receiving end would surely merit a hearing, and the latter, being related directly to his cases by the patient doctor relationship, which is diluted and weakened in specialist patient care, would be in a better position to voice the difficulties conceived than specialists.

Much of the discussions is a recounting of the various aspects of law, and an expression of the doubts and fears of the practicing surgeons and physicians. The fact that they are from France, America, United Kingdom, and Holland shows what a universal problem progress in medicine has caused to medical ethics. This is a book which must be of interest to all doctors, and would form a basis for many more such discussions in the future.

A. L. Gwee

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