

## REVIEWS

## MEDICAL CARE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES,

Edited by Maurice King.

Oxford University Press. 1966. Price unmarked.

Few practitioners in Singapore can claim personal experience in working in primitive conditions—in areas where there are few doctors and trained assistants and where there is lack of medical equipment and drugs. The nearest to such conditions locally are the rural areas and the conditions of service during the Japanese Occupation.

Working in a fairly well-developed and comprehensive medical service it is difficult for a practitioner to imagine work under less favoured conditions. Yet there are vast areas of the world where poverty and under-development condemn its people (estimated by the editor of this Book as comprising two-thirds of the world's population) to under-medical care.

This book is really a handbook for the medical practitioner working in such countries, particularly in the African situation. It is largely a compilation of papers from a WHO/UNICEF Conference on "Health Centres and Hospitals in Africa". It may appear incongruous that the editor is a microbiologist in Makerere University College in Uganda. But he is obviously an enthusiast, and it is evident that a person working in such places has to be a man of many parts.

The book is a collection of assorted information and practical advice on a wide range of subjects. There are chapters on planning and organising of a health service; its administration; on health education; on laboratory techniques, a blood transfusion service and on the keeping of medical records, family planning services and others.

The discussions sometimes go into considerable minutiae. For example, the discussions on the merits of unburnt brick as a building material are lengthy and would not be appreciated here. The chapter on the laboratory service details actual laboratory techniques for the common examinations. The section on fluid replacement in dehydration in children is well-worth studying even by persons working in well developed paediatric departments: the fluid replacement chart (a duplicate is helpfully given for extraction) will be a useful guide for doctors having to treat children suffering from gastroenteritis.

The value of the book is further enhanced by the appendices which list suppliers of equipment, lists certain library books which are considered basic, apparatus, drugs, and even their dosages.

In collecting material for such a book the difficulty is in selection of what should be included and what material should be excluded. The relevance of including chapters which are directed to persons who will be charged with building up a health service and its administration, and then to include chapters for clinicians is hard to understand for one who has no experience of conditions in developing societies such as in Africa, until it is realised that a practitioner working in such situations may be required to undertake some, or all of these various functions, and the detailed advice and instructions will, indeed, be helpful.

It would, however, have been better if the editor had provided for an out-and-out handbook of instructions rather than compiling instructions and advice with a descriptive text which must, in such circumstances, appear to be so much padding. An attempt, however, is given to unify the subject matter by providing some underlying thoughts to the advice given. The editor gives these as "propositions" and "axioms" at the beginning of the book. These were largely derived from conclusions arrived at the Conference or are the editor's own assessment of the principles which underpin the line taken in the subsequent chapters. But given in such form it is difficult to appreciate and might well have been left out.

In fact, the underlying style of presentation is still too closely tied up with the style of presentation of conference papers. This is shown in a rather disconcerting way in which the chapters and sections are numbered—by a decimal system which is not often self-evident. References to articles, to books and suppliers of equipment are made in a rather confusing way. A standard form of notation would have been simpler, and better understood.

In the handbook of this nature, it is essential that information is brought up-to-date and a revision for such changes is made by amendments which are notified in the East African

Medical Journal. This is a farsighted arrangement which enhances the value of the book. Although few will find the book applies to the local situation, local practitioners will find it

useful to dip into its pages for there is a wealth of sound advice which would be helpful even in the more sophisticated practice in Singapore.

**Ho Guan Linn**

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MANSON'S TROPICAL DISEASES By Sir Philip H. Manson-Bahr, C.M.G., D.S.O., M.A., M.D., D.T.M. & H. Cantab., F.R.C.P. Lond., M.D.(Hon. Causa) Malaya. London. Bailliere, Tindall & Cassell Ltd., 16th Edition, 1966, pp. 1131 Illustrated. Price 110s.

This book was first published by Sir Patric Manson in 1898 and is now in its 16th edition, the 15th edition having been published in 1960 by Sir Philip H. Manson-Bahr. The book which started out as an "Introduction" to medicine in the Tropics is now a major text. All parts of the book have been extensively revised with two new important additions:—ophthalmology in the Tropics and the use of the fluorescent antibody techniques in tropical medicine.

The section on ophthalmology in the Tropics has been long awaited as the incidence of diseases of the eye is quite high in most tropical regions.

The study of immunological processes by the fluorescent antibody technique has been applied to the identification of tropical parasites and will appeal to the clinician as such fluorescent microscopical preparations can be prepared within a few hours and a tentative diagnosis may be given sooner than by cultivation.

Antibodies can be made to fluoresce when irradiated with blue, or ultraviolet light, if a fluorescent organic molecule is attached chemically to the antibody. When the labelling molecule has been properly selected, the resulting fluorescence is bright enough to render even a small amount of antibody visible under the microscope.

In a work of such a size it is perhaps difficult to keep it up to date with the recent advances in tropical regions. A new type of haemorrhagic fever has been reported over recent years in South East Asia. Epidemics have been reported in the Philippines in 1956, in Thailand in 1958 and in Singapore in 1960, and now in many more S.E. Asian countries. This entity seems to be omitted.

Despite small omissions this book is highly recommended to all practitioners of Tropical Medicine.

**Evelyn Hanam**