

Books

Surgical Case-Histories from the Past

By Harold Ellis. Pp. 244. Illustrated. £20,00. London: Royal Society of Medicine Press. 1994. ISBN 1-85315-222-6.

This book by a surgeon brings together the stories of many surgical firsts in history. Apart from providing the reader with the biographical information on the persons described, it also reproduces the full original article on the operation performed by the surgeon in question. This book makes for fascinating reading and utter enjoyment for those who are interested in the history of medicine. There are descriptions of the first ovariectomy, the first antiseptic operation, the first elective splenectomy, gastrectomy, cholecystectomy and many more.

A section on the Surgeon at War describes many operations performed out of need to save lives and alleviate suffering, including the above-elbow amputation on Admiral Nelson in 1797. There is a section on Surgical Emergencies and Disasters and a section on the Surgeon at Work describing mastectomy, plastic surgery of the nose and the removal of foreign objects and other surgical exploits.

This book is a must for everyone who appreciates the activities of the predecessors in his field. A beautiful contribution to the history of medicine.

C. F. van der Merwe

Pain — Acute and Chronic

By E. A. Shipton. Pp. x + 299. Illustrated. R79,00. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press. 1993. ISBN 1-86814-241-8.

It is only in recent years that clinicians have focused on pain as an entity deserving specific expertise. Medical students and physicians in training programmes have little if any attention drawn to what is clearly a major need in medicine. In the last few years there has been an explosion of interest in Europe and the United States and numerous new modalities have been introduced in the management of this perplexing problem.

This book provides the student and practitioner with an eminently readable and current overview of the subject and describes specific interventions, often accompanied by diagrams.

The opening chapter introduces modern concepts of pain and its management, and is followed by chapters on agents and drug delivery techniques useful in pain management. There is a section on regional blockade and a comprehensive section on the problem of sympathetic pain syndromes. Sections on various aspects of interventional techniques follow, and deal with various approaches to long-term nerve blockade and ablation, stimulation analgesia, surgical intervention and psychological intervention. There is a section on rehabilitation with interesting comments on the role of compensation and pain and the book concludes with a chapter on possible future developments in the field.

This book does not constitute a comprehensive account of the subject for reference purposes but it is practical and has a commonsense approach which one sometimes finds lacking in more voluminous publications.

The only area that is somewhat deficient is the management of post-operative pain. An increasing number of patients are now expecting a 'pain free' hospital experience when undergoing surgical treatment. There is also little attention paid to the cost saving to a hospital in terms of shortening hospital stay when post-operative pain is properly handled. I believe that this merits a special chapter as it is, after all, the easiest of pain syndromes to manage. Scant mention is made of the cost to society in terms of absences from work and the debilitating effect of pain on productivity.

Overall, this is an extremely useful addition to medical literature and I recommend it for medical students and clinicians at all levels.

M. F. M. James

Western Diseases. Their Dietary Prevention and Reversibility

By N. J. Temple & D. P. Burkitt. Pp. ix + 437. \$49,50. Totowa, New Jersey: The Humana Press Inc. 1994. ISBN 0-896-03264-7.

The present cost of sophisticated medicine in South Africa has made it largely unaffordable for most people. Medical research is still mainly industry driven and not necessarily directed to the country's needs. The search for cheaper alternatives is now forced on us. We are also forced to look at preventative and community medicine to achieve affordable quality lifestyles and health for the population. This book is timely in this regard.

The editors convened a panel of eminent public health authorities, nutritionists and epidemiologists to explore the causes, prevention and reversibility of diseases such as cancer, coronary heart disease, hypertension and obesity. The leading role that the 'western' diet has played in the mortality of the western world is documented extensively. One chapter, written by Walker, Labaradios and Glatthaar is dedicated to diet-related disease patterns in South African inter-ethnic populations. The role of fibre, fat, salt and the controversial cholesterol is described in detail. The role of diet in degenerative diseases, the effects of vitamins and minerals on various of these diseases and practical means to prevent western disease are extensively reported.

The reply from Cleave (*The Saccharine Disease*, 1966) to Temple (one of the present editors) is very appropriate with respect to the future approach to disease prevention and research in nutrition; 'I am terribly sorry, but if you want to achieve salvation you will have to think far more simply than you do at present.' The answers are there, it is up to us to see them, apply them and to experience the affordable results.

This book is not yet obligatory reading to health professionals but may soon be. It is better to read it voluntarily now before you are forced to read and take note of it later when it could be too late.

C. F. van der Merwe

Books received

The receipt of these books is acknowledged, and this listing must be regarded as sufficient return for the courtesy of the sender. Books that appear to be of particular interest will be reviewed as space permits. The *SAMJ* does not publish unsolicited reviews.

HIV Infection in Women. Ed. by Howard Minkoff, Jack A. DeHovitz and Ann Duerr. Pp. 344. \$123,50. New York: Raven Press. 1994. ISBN 0-7817-0236-4.

Financial Management of Water Supply and Sanitation. A Handbook. WHO. Pp. x + 83. Sw.fr.20/US\$18. Geneva: WHO. 1994. ISBN 92-4-154472-4.

Operation and Maintenance of Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Systems. A Guide for Managers. WHO. Pp. ix + 102. Sw.fr.23/US\$20,70. Geneva: WHO. 1994. ISBN 92-4-154471-6.

Fluorides and Oral Health. Report of a WHO Expert Committee on Oral Health Status and Fluoride Use. WHO Technical Report Series, No. 846. Pp. v + 37. Sw.fr.8/US\$7,20. Geneva: WHO. ISBN 92-4-120846-5.

Chemotherapy of Leprosy. Report of a WHO Study Group. WHO Technical Report Series, No. 847. Pp. v + 24. Sw.fr.6/US\$5,40. Geneva: WHO. 1994. ISBN 92-4-120847-3.

Health Promotion and Community Action for Health in Developing Countries. WHO. Pp. vii + 122. Sw.fr.25/US\$22,50. Geneva: WHO. 1994. ISBN 92-4-156167-X.

Cost Analysis in Primary Health Care. A Training Manual for Programme Managers. Ed. by A. Creese and D. Parker. Pp. x + 147. Sw.fr.25/US\$22,50. Geneva: WHO. 1994. ISBN 92-4-154470-8.

Phenol. Environmental Health Criteria, No. 161. WHO. Pp. 151. Sw.fr.23/US\$20,70. Geneva: WHO. 1994. ISBN 92-4-157161-6.

Touch, Temperature, and Pain in Health and Disease: Mechanisms and Assessments. Progress in Pain Research and Management Volume 3. Ed. by Jörgen Boivie, Per Hansson and Ulf Lindblom. Pp. xiv + 520. Illustrated. \$69,00. Seattle: International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP PRESS). 1994. ISBN 0-931092-08-6.