

REVIEWS OF BOOKS : BOEKRESENSIES

THE DENTAL ASSISTANT'S HANDBOOK

The Dental Assistant's Handbook. (Second Edition). By G. I. West. Pp. x+115. 71 Illustrations. 10s. 6d. London: Messrs. William Heinemann Medical Books Ltd. 1956.

Contents: Introduction. 1. General Reception and Secretarial Duties. 2. Surgery Duties. 3. Sterilization. 4. Psychological Approach to Patients. 5. Dental Hygiene. 6. Conservative Work. 7. The Anatomy of Teeth. 8. Dental Radiography. 9. Anaesthesia. 10. Dental Instruments and Equipment. 11. Common Dental Diseases and Abnormalities. 12. Prosthetics. 13. Dental Formulae. 14. Training and Employment. Index.

There is a very close relationship between the dental surgeon and his dental assistant that should be founded upon a sure foundation of respect and confidence, in order to survive the daily strain of a busy dental practice. Therefore it behoves the dentist to take special precautions in his search for the efficient one, and having searched and chosen one to educate and train her to his requirements. For this purpose G. I. West's booklet is available, and is useful both to trainer and trainee, for its concise yet comprehensive survey of the subject as well as its sympathetic understanding of the difficulties and requirements of the new girl. The activities of dental practice are reviewed under suitable chapters such as operative dental surgery, orthodontia, prosthetics, anaesthesia, radiography, psychology. The text is interspersed with liberal illustrations of dental instruments and equipment.

It is inevitable that each reader should think, as I have done, of some detail for inclusion in this book, but the very purpose of brevity would be lost by attempting to include all these trivia.

Nevertheless, I would appreciate an accentuation of the need in the trainee of clear and attractive diction, of a clear and legible handwriting, and a sense of humour. The lack of these three attributes can become very jarring with the repetition of the daily impact of nurse upon doctor in the stress of a busy practice.

Extra-mural activities, such as the payment and receipt of car licence and third party insurance premiums *before* they fall due, reminders of social engagements, etc., are helpful and evoke appreciation.

The ultimate chapter on training and employment is as useful to the dental surgeon as it might be to the prospective trainee, and is a fitting conclusion to an admirable little book.

F.A.N.

DENTAL HEALTH

Dental Health. Edited by H. H. Stones, M.D., M.D.S., F.D.S.R.C.S. Pp. 83+62 illustrations (51 in colour). 10s. 6d. post free. London: Dental Board of the United Kingdom. 1956.

Contents: 1. Anatomy and Physiology of the Teeth and Gums. 2. Diet and Dental Health. 3. Dental Diseases: Dental Caries, Gingivitis and Pyorrhoea. Malocclusion—Irregular teeth. 4. Control and Prevention of Dental Diseases: Control of Dental Caries, Prevention of Gingivitis and Pyorrhoea, Prevention of Malocclusion—Irregular teeth. Appendix. Typical Questions and Answers. Glossary. List of Dental Health Education Productions. Index.

This small book is sponsored and published by The Dental Board of the United Kingdom, to meet the requirements of school teachers in the quest of information on the anatomy and development of teeth, and common dental diseases. It is edited by Mr. H. H. Stones, Professor of Dental Surgery of the University of Liverpool, and many of its profuse illustrations in colour are by Mr. D. J. Kidd.

The subject matter is meticulously correct and comprises four chapters on Anatomy, Diet, Diseases and Prevention, with an appended list of useful posters, cinefilms, charts, etc., available from the Dental Board of the United Kingdom.

There is a glossary of terms employed, showing their derivation from the original French, Greek, Latin or other roots, that contrasts strangely in its pedantry, with the fanatical insistence of the Editor on a summary of each chapter, even of one chapter four pages in length.

The illustrations of normal and abnormal occlusion are unfortunate in their choice of colour. By suitable adjustments, these could remain informative without being repellent; the illustrations on tooth-brush drill, on the other hand, are attractive and refreshing; constituting a psychologically correct antidote to the potentially depressing subject of dental hygiene.

F.A.N.

SOUTH AFRICAN SNAKE VENOMS

South African Snake Venoms and Antivenoms. By P. A. Christensen, M.B. (Copenh.), Dip. Bact. Pp. 129. 43 Figures. Johannesburg: The South African Institute for Medical Research. 1955.

Contents: Introduction. Classification. Nature and Yield of Venom. Effect of Venom. Physical and Chemical Properties of Cobra Venom. Physical and Chemical Properties of Viper Venom. Electrophoresis of Venom. Absorption Spectra of Venoms. Influence of Drying on Venoms. Stability of Venom. Sterilization of Venom Solutions. Inactivation of Venom: Production of Anti-Snakebite Serum. Purification and Concentration of Antivenene. Estimation of Potency of Antivenene. The Cross Neutralizing Action of Antivenene. Incidence of Snakebite. Symptoms of Snakebite. Treatment of Snakebite. Alleged Antidotes and Other Therapeutic Agents. Snake Venom in Therapy. References. Author Index. Subject Index.

The total number of deaths from snake bite occurring every year in South Africa must be quite considerable but a true estimate of the incidence is impossible. Almost fifty of approximately 600 known species of venomous snakes in the world are found in this country. When it is realised in addition that the complex venoms secreted by clearly distinct species may be similar but not identical it is not surprising that the whole subject is fraught with difficulty and notwithstanding an abundant literature is still wide open for research.

Dr. Christensen has performed a useful service in presenting most of the available information on South African venoms and antivenoms, with much material based on his own research. The list of contents (above) indicates the general approach, but there is much detailed information with many tables and figures, particularly for the laboratory worker, on the effects of venom, their physical and chemical properties, and the estimation of the potency of antivenene. For the doctor in practice the final section on the incidence of snake bite (including seasonal aspects, age distribution, body site, geographical distribution), and the symptomatology and treatment are especially interesting. It is noteworthy that European children up to 10 years of age constitute a large number of those who are bitten. In general it is shown that the incidence of snake bite could probably be much reduced if shoes or boots, especially high boots, were worn. Viperine bites are more common than elapine (cobra, ringhals, mamba) bites; the ubiquitous puff adder, the largest and most venomous viper in Southern Africa heads the list. The incidence is highest in the coastal regions, especially in Natal.

The various measures adopted in the treatment of snake bite are carefully reviewed; the care required with a tourniquet to avoid aggravating the local action of viper venom, and certain other dangers, are emphasised.

This book will serve as a great aid to all persons interested in snake venoms and their antidotes.

N.S.