

BOEKBESPREKINGS : BOOK REVIEWS

PSYCHIATRY IN GENERAL PRACTICE

Psychiatry in General Practice. By J. A. Weijel, M.D. Pp: viii + 208. 37s. 6d. Amsterdam, London, New York, Princeton: Elsevier Publishing Company. 1958.

The author has worked in a research team with the famous Dr. Querido of Amsterdam, who demonstrated conclusively that many of the patients admitted to general hospitals had psychological and social problems about which they did not complain. In this book the way in which a patient's medical problem is interwoven with psychiatric problems is explored. As psychiatric knowledge becomes better used in general hospitals, inevitably general practitioners themselves will want to obtain understanding about mental mechanisms and will want to train themselves in psychiatric treatment techniques. The book deals with the nature of the general practitioner's approach to the patient and the patient's own attitude to medical treatment, and it attempts to make psychiatric methods available for general practitioners.

In this difficult task the author is fairly successful. He holds that while a vast amount of knowledge about the psyche is already available, it is not put into a form the non-specialist is able to use. The general practitioner cannot depend on classical descriptions of the transference situation, for the emotional attachment of a mentally normal patient towards his doctor is very different from the transference of a frankly psychiatric patient. The general practitioner must examine his patient physically and, the author stresses, need not deter himself with the consideration a psychotherapist would entertain (that he might be acting seductively towards the patient). It is not helpful for the general practitioner to reflect when he injects his patient that he might be acceding to coital phantasies in the patient's mind. General practice is totally different from an out-patient psychiatric department.

However, when doctors become more widely aware that neurotic complaints can be hidden in physical disorders, and perceive the origins of neurosis in the problems of life itself—the stresses

of living with others, of civilization and culture—the conventional medical response of reducing a 'case' to a somatic level is no longer possible. The doctor then needs the techniques of opening the 'case' to include the psychosocial aspects of the patient's existence. The author has attempted to provide interested doctors with a psychosocial 'stethoscope' for discovering the psychological aspects of the patient's life. Few doctors reading his book will remain unimpressed with the inadequacy of traditional medical approaches in general practice.

H.W.

PLASTIC PROCEDURES IN GENERAL SURGERY

Fundamental Technique of Plastic Surgery and their Surgical Applications. By I. A. McGregor, M.B., F.R.C.S. (Eng.), F.R.F.P.S. (Glas.). Pp. viii + 244. Illustrated. 30s. net + 1s. 7d. postage abroad. Edinburgh and London: E. & S. Livingstone Ltd. 1960.

This book is not, as its title suggests, intended for the plastic surgeon, but should prove a valuable guide to the general surgeon who is frequently confronted with conditions in which skin coverage is necessary.

The procedures dealt with are clearly described and well illustrated, and they cover a wide field of surgery. The chapter on eyelids should be of considerable interest to the ophthalmic surgeon, while that on injury to the hand will provide food for thought for surgeons engaged in accident work.

The author makes a strong plea for immediate skin coverage of the hand and fingers which have suffered skin loss. Prompt treatment on these lines will minimize infection and establish function in a relatively short period, and avoid the frozen hand so often seen in neglected cases.

That surgical bugbear 'the decubitus ulcer' is also discussed and its treatment well illustrated. The author should be congratulated on covering so wide a field in so clear a manner.

N.P.