

BOEKBESPREKINGS : BOOK REVIEWS

AGEING

Colloquia on Ageing. Ciba Foundation. Vol. 5. The Lifespan of Animals. Edited by G. E. W. Wolstenholme, O.B.E., M.A., M.B., M.R.C.P. and Maeve O'Connor, B.A. Pp. xii+324+46. 58 illustrations. 48s. net. London: J. & A. Churchill Ltd. 1959.

This volume contains the proceedings of the fifth Colloquium on Ageing held in April 1959. The contributors have produced a fascinating group of papers on such varied subjects as the life expectancy of offspring in relation to parental age, the lifespan of cattle and horses, arteriosclerosis in birds, longevity of fishes in captivity, factors influencing the lifespan of bees, and the biology of ageing in insects.

Some interesting conclusions were arrived at. In the past hundred years or so the peak in the age distribution of deaths in the general population has moved to a more advanced age (for men from 72 to 76 years and for women from 73 to 80) and the proportion of people attaining their allotted lifespan has increased for both sexes, from about 40% to about 70%. Arteriosclerosis has not been found in fishes, but pathological changes indicative of ageing do occur in other organs, e.g. cirrhosis and fatty changes in the liver and kidneys, haemochromatosis, and hypochromic anaemia. Observations on the accumulation of non-infectious lesions in rats in relation to age have shown that the lifespan of these animals is directly related to the age of onset of lesions of the major diseases of this species—chronic nephrosis and glomerulonephritis, myocardial degeneration, periarteritis, and pituitary adenoma. Data on human lesions, e.g. generalized arteriosclerosis, prostatic hypertrophy, coronary thrombosis, and carcinoma of the stomach, give similar curves to those of rats (plotted on the same age scale) except that the onset of the human diseases does not occur until many years later than is the case with rats.

Other interesting facts are the following: A maximum longevity of 7.5 weeks was found for honey bees. Female houseflies were found to have a mean longevity of 29 days and males a mean longevity of 17 days. The longest-lived freshwater fish is the sturgeon; the longest ever recorded was 151 years. The chairman points out in his summary that man, skunks, and porcupines are amongst the few animals who know how to survive into the period of senescence and remarks that 'the nature of this grouping probably has some moral significance'.

The book provides a valuable up-to-date account of developments in this important field.

In addition to the proceedings of the fifth Colloquium on Ageing this volume also contains a combined index to this and the previous four volumes. H.Z.

HEALTH AND ILLNESS IN YOUNG CHILDREN

Growing up in Newcastle upon Tyne. A continuing study of health and illness in young children within their families. By F. J. W. Miller, S. D. M. Court, W. S. Walton and E. G. Knox. Pp. xxi+369. Illustrations. 25s. 0d. London: Oxford University Press. South African Office: Oxford University Press, P.O. Box 1141, Cape Town. 1960.

This book presents the facts of development and diseases of 847 children observed for 5 years (1947-1952).

Part I describes the families set against the social and economic background of Newcastle.

Part II deals with the housing, family, and medical care of the child.

Part III gives a detailed account of the illnesses of the first 5 years.

Part IV gives an estimation of the incidence of illness and defects in preschool children, calculated from the facts of the survey, and makes suggestions for further improvements in the health of the children.

There are many useful facts and figures presented in this volume that will prove of great interest to the practitioner and paediatrician. For example, only 11 children received no medical attention at all during the 5 years, 61% of infective illnesses were respiratory, and nearly all the serious and fatal infective illnesses occurred in the first year, except pneumonia. Behaviour problems occurred in only 55 children (6%). This study is to continue through the school years and may be regarded, as was its predecessor, 'A Thousand Families in Newcastle upon Tyne' (Oxford University Press, 1954), as a classic. J.D.L.H.

COMPLICATIONS OF PREGNANCY

Medical, Surgical and Gynecological Complications of Pregnancy. By the staff of the Mount Sinai Hospital, New York City. Edited by Alan F. Guttmacher, M.D. and Joseph J. Rovinsky, M.D. Pp. x+619. Illustrated. \$16.50. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co. 1960.

This volume is an outcome of the commendable organization of the obstetric unit of the Mount Sinai Hospital. Ten specialty clinics (cardiac, pulmonary, hypertensive-renal, diabetic, haematological, neurological, psychosomatic, obstetric-gynaecological, endocrine, vaginitis, and varicose vein) function regularly within the framework of the obstetric department, to deal with the various intercurrent diseases that complicate pregnancy. Each clinic is conducted by a specialist in the field (physician, haematologist, surgeon, endocrinologist, etc.), as well as the obstetrician. This work is written by the team of specialists conducting these clinics, and is based on the material encountered at the Mount Sinai Hospital and supported by a most extensive reference to modern literature.

The result is a detailed and authoritative work dealing with practically every medical, surgical and gynaecological disease that may complicate the pregnant state—even conditions rarely encountered in pregnancy are dealt with fully, e.g. gunshot wounds of the pregnant uterus, Gaucher's disease, cancer of the thyroid, and diverticulitis. Particularly good chapters are those on the effect of radiation on the foetus, cancers during pregnancy, and pregnancy following plastic operations, but the standard of the entire work is high. It is a pity, however, that nephritis receives scant attention, and a few diseases such as parkinsonism, typhoid, and other acute fevers are omitted.

The publication can be confidently recommended, not only to those practising obstetrics, but also to physicians and surgeons. This book will undoubtedly become a valuable reference work for all who encounter the numerous medical, surgical, and gynaecological disorders that complicate pregnancy. In it will be found an abundance of information on these subjects as they affect the pregnant state, as well as a comprehensive list of the references that could be consulted. F.B.

MEDICAL CARE

The Demand for Medical Care. A study of the case-load in the Barrow and Furness Group of Hospitals. By G. Forsyth, B.A. (Econ.) and R. F. L. Logan, M.D., M.R.C.P. Pp. 153. Illustrated. 7s. 6d. London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press. 1960.

This little book, which deals with a study of a group of Lancashire hospitals by the Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust, will be of special value to readers interested in public health and in hospital planning and administration. The authors apply a rational approach to the problem of determining whether the provision of beds is sufficient to meet present and future needs.

Of particular interest, in the light of the shortage of hospital accommodation in many parts of South Africa, is the frequency with which the admission of patients was found to have been 'clinically unnecessary'. In general medicine, over a quarter of the bed patients were receiving care which could equally well have been given in an outpatient department or at home. Such a finding underlines the potential value, for this country, of an expansion of home-nursing facilities and other neighbourhood health services aimed at reducing the need for hospital care. J.H.A.

DERMATOLOGY

Year Book of Dermatology, 1959-1960. Edited by R. L. Baer, M.D. and V. H. Witten, M.D. Pp. 479. 59 figures. \$9.00. Chicago: Year Book Publishers, Inc. 1960.

Nobody can complain about the quality of the abstracts in this Year Book, but the editors really should make some effort to escape from parochialism. Fifty per cent of the articles abstracted appeared in American journals, mainly the *A.M.A. Archives of Dermatology* and the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*. The rest come from a limited range of journals from other countries that are, or ought to be, found in any university library. J.M.

TOXAEMIA OF PREGNANCY

The Aetiology and Arrest of Pre-Eclamptic Toxaemia with Early Ambulant Treatment. By K. Douglas Salzmann, M.D., M.R.C.P. (Ed.), D.Obst.R.C.O.G. Pp. viii+69. 1 illustration. 10s. 6d. net. London: H. K. Lewis & Co. Ltd. 1960.

In this monograph the author discusses certain aspects of the aetiology, symptomatology, and treatment of pre-eclamptic toxaemia. He favours the 'toxin' theory, suggesting that the toxins arise from a damaged placenta. The primary damage is due to the reaction of the mother to hormones produced by the foetus or by a hydatidiform mole. The toxins have a vasopressor effect causing the hypertension.

According to the author the treatment is very simple—the prolonged use of reserpine with a maximum dose of 1.0 mg. twice daily, as soon as the diastolic blood pressure exceeds 84 mm. Hg. Treatment in bed and inductions become unnecessary.

His results are excellent, but the series (158 patients treated with reserpine) is too small for a serious claim to be made.

J.N.d.V.

THE RETINA AND VISUAL PATHWAY

Physiology of the Retina and Visual Pathway. By G. S. Brindley, M.A., M.D. Pp. xi+298. Figures. 35s. net. London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd. 1960.

This sixth monograph of the Physiological Society is written by a specialist for specialists. It is a mine of accurate and up-to-date information on the chemical and neurological phenomena of vision. Experimental evidence for the principal theories is given in some detail and deductions from this evidence are closely reasoned. A chapter on the validity of subjective evidence, although concerned primarily with the visual sense, forms an important contribution to the whole problem of sensory experiments. The bibliography is comprehensive.

In spite of the author's praiseworthy attempt to keep the terminology simple, the book would be difficult reading for anyone with little previous knowledge of the physiology of vision. The reader, already versed in this speciality, who wishes to systematize his knowledge and bring it up to date, will find it a very useful addition to his library.

A.W.S.