Local Injection Therapy in Rheumatic Diseases. 3rd ed. A St J Dixon, J Graber. (Pp 169; Sw fr 36.) Basle: EULAR, 1989. ISBN 3-7177-0147-9.

That this little handbook should have reached its third edition is testimony in itself of its value and usefulness. Allan Dixon is above all else a practical rheumatologist with a knack for communicating. This comes out quite clearly throughout the text, which is amply illustrated by clear photographs and line drawings, many of them wittily undertaken by Richard Hill. Joe Graber made a considerable contribution in the initial putting together of this book when it started life as a series of educational supplements in the *EULAR Bulletin*. As each successive edition has appeared the text has been refined, and expanded where appropriate. This edition is bang up-to-date when, for instance, it points out that refrigerant sprays are not ozone friendly (they are just CFCs!). Every common joint and soft tissue injection is carefully described and there are many useful and practical tips about localising the injection and, most importantly, diagnostic points to ensure that injection is appropriate.

This book should be a part of every rheumatologist's library but more importantly should be one of the essential 'bench manuals' of the general practitioner with an interest in locomotor disorder. The ability to treat tennis elbow, the painful shoulder, and the swollen knee properly and speedily is of great practical benefit to the patient. If more injections were undertaken in the general practitioner's surgery morbidity would be much reduced, time lost from work and leisure considerably lessened, and rheumatology and orthopaedic clinics allowed to undertake more specialist care. This little book, perhaps coupled with a few sessions of practical instruction at an injection clinic, would form an excellent basis for many more doctors acquiring this immensely useful skill.

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Socio-legal Aspects of Medical Practice. Ed Robert Dingwall. (Pp 78; £7 (UK); £10 or \$15 (overseas)) London: Royal College of Physicians, 1989. ISBN 0-900596-84-8.

Medical complaints are increasing, and damages awarded in individual cases are greater, which resulted in 10-fold increases in real terms of Medical Defence Society subscriptions in just over a decade. This leads to the practice of defensive medicine, and in the United States of America a diminished recruitment of doctors for specialisms such as orthopaedic surgery and obstetrics and gynaecology. Patients want to know more and more, and what constitutes 'consent' has to be considered. On another front, the regulation of resources within the NHS has legal aspects, with acute dilemmas when potentially beneficial treatments are denied to patients on the grounds of cost. These issues are discussed in this slim volume of collected papers from members of the Centre for Socio-legal Studies at the University of Oxford, none of whom was medically qualified. The centre was set up in 1972 by the Social Science Research Council. It has attracted a group representing law, sociology and social policy, economics, social psychology, and history; they work mainly on civil law.

The papers make fascinating reading, and the doctor is likely to have more sympathy for the litigant when he considers the barriers of information and cost to the victims of negligence. He may even have doubts about the BMA protest to the Law Society about advertisements by solicitors which encourage

people to come forward if they believe they may have a claim for medical negligence or other personal injury. Alternative strategies, such as no fault compensation or effective social security, are discussed.

The pursuit of rationality has guided successive reorganisations of the NHS management structure, but in the past two decades disquiet with rational systems theory has hardened into wide-ranging criticism of its basic presuppositions. Readers will be intrigued and amused to learn of alternative models named 'incrementalism', 'garbage can', 'political approach', and 'institutional approach'. I was particularly surprised to learn that our own regional hospital board had been the subject of a definitive study!—it must have been a theoretical one. It is worth noting that the best run companies are able to combine strong central control with substantial decentralisation, autonomy, and entrepreneurship, and do this not through formal procedures and control systems but through values and culture.

I would have been intrigued to have had the discussion which doubtless ensued from these papers included in the volume. The editor concludes that there may be many future opportunities for collaboration between lawyers, social scientists, and the medical profession. It might be forced upon us.

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Back Pain: New Approaches to Rehabilitation and Education. Eds Martin Roland, J R Jenner. (Pp 258, £45.) Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989. ISBN 0-7190-2789-6.

In the discussion after one of the papers a delegate asked, 'Are you satisfied that doing something is better than doing nothing?' The answer fills libraries, but no conclusion is reached.

The problem of back pain seems eternal. Roland and Jenner have edited a book comprising papers from the symposium, together with guest authors, which highlights many dilemmas and none better than the contrasting philosophies of the first and last chapters, each written by an orthopaedic surgeon of distinction.

The opening chapter states that 0.7 to 0.8% of back sufferers may benefit from surgery, while very little physical treatment helps the rest and should be avoided. Conversely, the author of the final chapter discusses the value of segmental fusion procedures for disc lesions 'after all conservative treatments fail', which speaks volumes.

The intervening chapters mostly succinctly but on occasion too verbosely do discuss the intermediary alternative management techniques currently in favour for so called chronic mechanical back pain.

To the initiated it is all very familiar and frustrating. To the non-expert it may be baffling. To the philosopher it is screamingly obvious that there are many questions but no answers, and this is where Roland and Jenner score hands down. In representing the symposium speakers precisely, and offsetting their didactic and authoritarian views with thoughtful guest authors of penetrating and devastating insight, they highlight the appalling problems in dealing with sufferers from chronic back pain. This is a book for all those concerned with the symptom to read at least twice. If it only teaches humility and nothing else it has been a successful publication. It makes it uncomfortably clear that nothing is clear.

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