

suggested, but it is clear that at present there are more questions than answers to this problem. Perhaps some studies should have as their subject the advisers rather than the advised.

APRIL KAYE

**Behcet's Syndrome.** Eds. T. Lehner and C. G. Barnes. Pp. 323. £16.40. Academic Press: London. 1979.

This book records the proceedings of a conference held in the Royal Society of Medicine in February 1979 and appears with commendable speed after the conference. It suffers from the usual disadvantages of proceedings of a conference, the main one being lack of cohesion and completeness, though the symposium is better than most in this respect. It was a well structured meeting, and the book provides a wealth of information for students of this condition. It has 24 chapters divided into immunology, clinical manifestations, and treatment. An early chapter reports on the HLA A and B antigens in 185 patients. Smaller numbers are described in later chapters, but even so there are plenty of patients and experience of the disease. Unfortunately, although not stated, it becomes clear that the same patients journeyed through many of the chapters; but the differences in the numbers suggest that some of the travellers wearied on their way.

It is a well edited and well produced account of the proceedings and it records the hard work of many doctors and scientists in attempting to make some sense out of a mysterious condition. But I doubt whether the sparse contribution to knowledge justifies the production of such a book, particularly as it appears so soon after the publication of a similar symposium from Japan. Doubtless the publishers will make a profit if you or your computer buys the book, but I think that it will seldom be opened, will remain a monument to endeavour, and become irrelevant in a few years.

A. B. MYLES

**Arthritis and You.** By Martha Robinson. Pp. 88. £3.95. Ian Henry Publications: Hornchurch, Essex. 1980.

This small volume is written by a patient for patients, and as such it cannot be expected to compare in the scope and soundness of the advice it provides with some of the other small books already in print, such as that by Professor Malcolm Jayson and Dr St John Dixon or the more recent publication by Dr J. T. Scott. Both of these give a far more balanced view of the various kinds of arthritis and their correct treatment. For example, Martha Robinson states depressingly on the first page of chapter 1 that patients developing inflammatory kinds of arthritis in childhood or early middle age 'have 30 or 40 years of living before them with the prospect of becoming inevitably more disabled'. There are some other misconceptions, such as the statement that Dennis Potter's famous rheumatic complaint is rheumatoid arthritis, when I have always understood him to suffer from

severe psoriatic arthropathy. But to be fair this book is essentially as stated in its subtitle, 'a hand book for daily living', and as such it is a survey of ways of improving the activities of daily living as seen from the patient's end rather than that of an occupational therapist, who might readily have written a similar book with more expertise but perhaps without conveying the sense of enthusiasm and triumph over difficulty expressed in language any patient can clearly understand.

The author obviously suffers from acute episodes of joint pain, as many patients with rheumatoid arthritis do, even when their disease is on the whole well controlled. From her description it would seem that these are associated with a great deal of nervous tension, and her instructions on how to relax the body from head to toe during such episodes, which are scattered throughout the whole text of the book in a rather novel manner, may prove of value to certain types of patient. One must, however, take issue with certain of the devices which are recommended, and her dismissal of wrist splints is obviously based on her difficulties with old-fashioned plaster-of-Paris splints; the hand supports she illustrates would in my view be of little real value in alleviating pain or preventing deformities and certainly provide no support whatsoever to the wrists.

Most controversial of all, in view of the scant mention given to actual medical treatment in the book, is her enthusiastic and uncritical section devoted to the merits of Seatone, the extract of the gonad of the New Zealand green-lipped mussel. Fortunately this is tempered by the admission that there was not any real difference in her own stiffness and pain save perhaps for a diminution in the number of the acute attacks of the type described above. Such trials as have been done on this substance have failed to demonstrate any effect on laboratory tests and very doubtful response in patients who were the subject of an ill-controlled clinical trial. In this connection the advice and warnings issued by the Arthritis Foundation in America to combat the misrepresentation of drugs and other therapies to the general public should be more widely known. They include some or all of the following: Offering a 'special' or 'secret' formula or device for 'curing' arthritis; advertising or using case histories and testimonials from 'satisfied patients'; promising or implying a rapid or easy cure; and claiming to know the cause of arthritis and frequently to speak of 'cleansing the body of poisons' and claiming that surgery and drugs as prescribed by a physician are not necessary. Frequently there is the additional accusation that the 'medical establishment' is deliberately thwarting progress or persecuting those who possess the cure; moreover permission to subject the treatment to the well established methods of evaluation is rarely, if ever, given. Regrettably Seatone has been promoted by some of these methods, and it is sad to find the author promoting it in a section 4 times the length of that given to all other medications.

This book cannot be recommended for inclusion in a collection to be made available for patient education, nor does it provide any information which cannot be readily obtained from any hospital occupational therapy department.

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