

## Book reviews

**People With Arthritis Deserve Well-Trained Doctors.** Report on a workshop on undergraduate education in rheumatology. Eds. P. H. N. Wood and E. M. Badley. Pp. 55. 50p. ARC: London. 1981.

This report outlines the topics reviewed at a workshop held in Manchester in 1979 whose aim was to develop and adopt nationally agreed objectives for undergraduate training in rheumatology. It follows a survey by questionnaire completed by rheumatology teachers from United Kingdom medical schools. A useful summary of their findings is given with the report.

The detailed chronological documentary style does not always make for easy reading, but it contains much useful information and highlights the various deficiencies. A study of case notes will frequently emphasise the continued lack of training in the examination and recording of abnormalities in the locomotor system. In the post-mortem room much valuable evidence from the joints and spine is often neglected.

The need for more academic appointments held by teachers who will have time to define objectives and evaluate results is stressed. Formal lectures to large groups have obvious limitations. Teaching of skill and attitudes as well as the imparting of knowledge is important, and the relevance of rehabilitation is best taught on individual patients. Students should not always be banished from business rounds, when the holistic and team approach can be seen to play a vital role. This report provides a useful blueprint for all who are planning changes in their curriculum, and existing programmes need to be kept continually under review.

E. B. D. HAMILTON

**Topical Reviews in Rheumatic Disorders.** Vol. 1. Ed. A. G. S. Hill. Pp. 196. £11.50. John Wright: Bristol. 1980.

This is an interesting and well worthwhile collection of essays on problems which have stimulated the authors and appealed to the editor. His idea was 'to capture the spirit of good scientific meetings during the discussion of a formal presentation.'

In the first chapter Dr Philip Wood and his colleagues give a critical appraisal of medicine in the setting of a changing social structure. It certainly does this but from its title. 'Other waters flow,' onwards the message is clouded rather than elucidated by multitudinous mixed metaphors, verse, and adverbial superabundance Dr Ralph F. Jacox in the second chapter provides a Heberden Round with a review of cases following several themes. Clinicians will find it interesting and informative. The editor joins the contributors with an excellent review of surgical procedures in rheumatoid arthritis, clearly separating the established generally accepted operations

from the rest. Surgery of joint replacement, its present successes and problems, future hopes and prospects, are discussed by Professor V. Wright and Dr B. B. Seedhom of the Leeds Bioengineering Group. Dr H. F. H. Hill reminds us that it was only in 1973 that penicillamine was confirmed as able to modify rheumatoid arthritis by comparison with placebo, although in a dose now considered as too high. Selections of patients and selection of a dose regimen with an acceptable incidence of side effects are the theme of her writing. She has to confess she does not know the answer. As we still do not know how best to use gold after 50 years she should not be too disappointed. Genetics and environment in the HLA-related rheumatic disorders and the viral aetiology of rheumatoid arthritis are discussed in great detail by Dr A. Calin and Dr A. M. Denman respectively.

J. D. GOODE

**Back Pain: The Facts.** By Malcolm I. V. Jayson. Pp. 180. £4.95. Oxford University Press: Oxford. 1981.

How much should we tell our patients about the nature and consequences of their disease? This is of course an unanswerable question, since it depends on so many variables. In life-threatening disease the physicians must weight up the genuine desire and need for the patient to know, the wishes of relatives, and the probable effect on the patient of his considered prognosis.

Back pain, as Professor Jayson tells us in this book, affects most of us at some time in our lives and often tends to be a chronic and recurring affliction. Though not usually causing severe disability, it may lead the sufferer into an altered pattern of life. This then should surely be an indication for the patient to be told the nature of his disability and the limitations it may impose on his life style, since, as is so often said, he will have to live with it.

This book, it is said, 'is written for sufferers and others who are seeking readable, non-technical information on the back pain problem.' Readable it certainly is, written in a pleasant fireside chat style and without condescension. The 11 chapters cover the anatomy and function of the spine, the effects of back disorders on society, mechanical inflammatory disorders, psychological problems, and the whole spectrum of treatments available, including such fringe aspects as osteopathy, chiropractic, and acupuncture. The lay reader may become a little lost when he struggles to understand the complexities of computerised axial tomography and the actions of endorphins and enkephalin, but nevertheless in the end he will have a reasonable understanding of his back problem. Hopefully he will also have a sneaking sympathy for his attending physician's failure to make a precise diagnosis, for, as Professor Jayson remarks, it is better to be honest to the patients and oneself and label the problem as 'non-specific back pain.'