

Service located on the campus of the University of California at Berkeley. This hospital serves a community of 27,000 students.

He has, in a very real sense, written a primer of practical psychiatry, a do-it-yourself book. The level is aimed at the psychiatrist who is already familiar with basic psycho-analytic concepts. A useful practical feature is that the therapist is often quoted verbatim. Thus one is somehow sitting-in on an experienced therapist. (This is something, incidentally, that could be usefully done for behaviour therapy.)

The book first outlines basic ego psychology, but this outline would not be easy for those who are unfamiliar with ego psychology already. Basic simple principles of psychiatric interviewing are then considered, such as establishing rapport, advice and interpretation. History taking and mental state examination are outlined and psychiatric treatment planning is considered. The remainder of the book considers psychotherapeutic inter-action in detail, the use of psychiatric hospitalization and psychotropic drugs.

This book sets out to teach, and it does not aim to be over-critical. It is well worth purchasing for the library of a department in which a number of junior staff are carrying out weekly psychotherapy under supervision.

SIDNEY CROWN.

A COOK-BOOK ON DEFICIENCY

Mental Retardation. Diagnosis and Treatment.

Edited by CHARLES M. POSER. New York, Evanston and London: Hoeber Medical Division, Harper and Row. Pp. 271 + ix. Price 80s.

This down-to-earth book is a testimony to the value of a multi-disciplinary team approach to diagnosis and management in mental retardation. There are seventeen contributors, and the disciplines represented include neurology, paediatrics, psychiatry, psychology, neurosurgery, genetics, education and speech therapy.

It is a didactic handbook rather than a work of reference; the references, which appear at the end of respective chapters, tend to be sparse (an exception is the list of 102 references at the end of the chapter on treatment of metabolic and endocrine causes of mental retardation). The references mostly are not specified in the text, and obviously they are intended mainly as guides to further reading.

For the most part this book is authoritatively

written, but occasionally its boldness, combined with a tendency to oversimplification, leads to rather rash statements that could be misleading. For example, there is still much debate over the significance and timing of the evolution and dissolution of primitive reflexes in infancy, but these are dealt with in a couple of pages with a few *ex cathedra* statements as to when they are present and when they should disappear in the normal infant. Another example, and this time one which could have serious consequences if taken at face value by a reader with insufficient neurological knowledge, is the statement about lumbar puncture for examination of cerebro-spinal fluid (page 33). It is stated that if information to be obtained from this procedure is essential for establishing a diagnosis, in effect there are no specific contraindications to it. The fatal result that could ensue if it were carried out in the case of a patient with raised intra-cranial pressure is surely a contraindication!

These examples smack of the 'cook-book' approach which tends to prevail in some of the chapters. This is exemplified even better by a very short section (less than one page) on urinary screening tests. To be fair, this is prefaced by the statement that detailed investigation of possible metabolic disturbances requires highly specialized equipment and personnel. The do-it-yourself instructions for preliminary screening, however, could misfire, and a false negative result could preclude further investigation. For instance, taking the simplest of these screening tests, no warning is given that over-acidification of the urine from phenylketonuric patients can lead to a negative result in the ferric chloride test.

These criticisms are perhaps rather harsh, because most medical readers using these procedures would be sufficiently well-informed to recognize these shortcomings in the text. The main value of the book is the overall picture it succeeds in giving of the many parallel lines of approach needed in the investigation, management and possibly specific medical or surgical treatment of mentally retarded patients. It is a book that would be useful to all members, medical and non-medical, of hospital teams working in the field of mental subnormality, and to those working in the community outside hospital, such as Mental Welfare Officers and School Medical Officers. The book was produced in the United States, and here and there one finds American terminology and usage which may not apply in the United Kingdom, such as references to certain psychological tests standardized in the United States and to American school grades in the chapter on educational information. This, however, is not a serious shortcoming.

VALERIE COWIE.